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THE  
HISTORY  
OF  
ENGLISH LITERATURE.

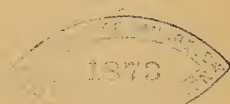
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THE  
HISTORY  
OF  
ENGLISH LITERATURE;  
WITH  
AN OUTLINE OF THE ORIGIN AND GROWTH  
OF  
THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE:  
ILLUSTRATED BY EXTRACTS.

*For the Use of Schools and of Private Students.*

By WILLIAM SPALDING, A.M.,  
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OF SAINT ANDREWS.



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# P R E F A C E.

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THIS volume is offered, as an Elementary Text-Book, to those who are interested in the instruction of young persons.

The tenor of my own pursuits, and my hearty concurrence in the wish to see the systematic study of English Literature occupying a wider place in the course of a liberal education, seemed to justify me in attempting, at the request of the publishers, to frame an unambitious Manual, which should relate and explain some of the leading facts in the Intellectual History of our Nation. Those youthful students, for whose benefit the book is intended, will, I would fain hope, find it not ill calculated to serve, whether in the class-room or in the closet, as an incitement to the perusal, and a clue through the details, of works possessing higher pretensions, and imparting fuller information.

It is for others to decide whether, in ushering young readers into the field of Literary History, I have been able to make the study interesting or attractive to them. I am at least confident that the book does not contain any thing that is beyond their comprehension, either in its manner of describing facts, or in its criticisms of works, or in its incidental suggestion of critical and historical principles. But, on the other hand, having much faith in the vigour of youthful intelligence, and a strong desire to aid in the right guidance of youthful feeling, I have not shrunk from availing myself freely of the opportunities, furnished profusely by a theme so noble, for endeavouring to prompt active thinking and to awaken refined and elevating sentiments. I have frequently invited the student to reflect, how closely the world of letters is related, in all its regions, to that world of reality and action in the midst of which it comes into being : how Literature is, in its origin, an effusion and perpetuation of human thoughts, and emotions, and wishes ; how it is,

in its processes, an art which obeys a consistent and philosophical theory ; how it is, in its effects, one of the highest and most powerful of those influences, that have been appointed to rule and change the social and moral life of man.

The nature of the plan, according to which the materials are disposed, will appear from a glance at the Table of Contents. The History of English Literature being distributed into Two great Sections, the First Part treats the earlier of the two. It describes the Literary Progress of the Nation from its dawn in the Anglo-Saxon Times, to the beginning of the Sixteenth Century, which is taken as the close of the Middle Ages. In the course of that long period, not only were the foundations of our native speech laid, but its structure may correctly be held to have been in all essential points completed. Accordingly, the Outline of the Origin and Growth of the English Language, which could not conveniently have been incorporated with the earlier literary chapters, seemed to find its fit place in the Second Part. The Third Part, resuming the History of our Literature at the opening of Modern Times, traces its revolutions down to the present day. The changes that have occurred in the language during this most recent period, appearing to be really nothing more than varieties of style, do not require a separate review, but receive incidental notice as they successively present themselves.

The Historical Survey of English Literature, announced in the title-page as the principal business of the volume, thus occupies the First and Third Parts. The former of these, dealing with the Anglo-Saxon Times and the Middle Ages, is short. It is so constructed, likewise, (unless the aim has been missed,) as to introduce the reader gradually and easily to studies of this sort. It contains comparatively little speculation of any kind : and those literary monuments of the period, which were thought to be most worthy of attention, are described with considerable fulness, both in the hope of exciting interest, and because the books fall into the hands of few. In the Summary of Modern Literature which fills the Third Part, more frequent and sustained efforts are made to arouse reflection, both by occasional remarks on the relations between intellectual culture and the other elements of society, and by hints as to the theoretical laws on which criticism should be founded. Modern works, also, while the characteristics of several of the most celebrated are discussed at considerable length, are hardly ever analyzed so fully as were some of the older ones ; and, as we approach our own times, it is presumed that particular description of the contents of popular books becomes less and less imperative.

In the course of those Literary Chapters, some information is given in regard to a large number of authors and their writings. But, of a great many of these, all that is told amounts to very little; and I may say, generally, that names of minor note, inserted only on account of circumstances marking them off from the vast crowd of names omitted, receive no further scrutiny than such as is required for indicating cursorily the position of those who bore them. On a few of those great men, who have been our guides and masters in the departments of thought and invention that are most widely interesting, there is bestowed an amount of attention which may by some readers be thought excessive, but which to myself seemed likely to make the book both the more readable and the more useful. There must, however, be great diversity of opinion among diverse critics, both as to the selection of names to be commemorated, and as to the comparative prominence due to different authors, and works, and kinds of composition. It is enough for me to say, that, in these matters as in others, I have formed my judgment with due deliberation, and made the best use I could of all the information that is at my command.

Many little points have been managed with a view to facilitate the use of the volume in public teaching. Dates, and other particulars, which, though often not to be dispensed with, tend to obstruct reading aloud, are, always where it is possible, thrown into the margin. Bibliographical details are generally avoided, except a few, which illustrate either the works described or the history of the author or his time. Hardly anywhere, for instance, are successive editions noted, unless when the student is asked to make himself acquainted with the English Translations of the Holy Bible; an exception which is surely not wrong, in a work designed to assist in informing the minds of Christian youth.

The Series of Illustrative Extracts is as full as it was found possible to make it: and it is ample enough to throw much light on the narrative and observations furnished by the Text. The selections have been made in obedience to the same considerations, which dictated copious criticisms of a few leading writers. The works quoted from are not many in comparison with those named in the body of the book, being only some of those that are most distinguished as masterpieces of genius or most eminently characteristic as products of their age: and the intention was, that every specimen should be large enough to convey a notion, not altogether inadequate, of its author's manner both in thought and in style. No Extracts are given in the First Part. The writers of those ancient times could not, at least till we reach the very latest of them, be



understood by ordinary readers without explanatory and glossarial notes. Accordingly the quotations from their writings are thrown into the Second Part; where verbal interpretation is less out of place; and where, also, they serve the double use of illustrating the progress of the language, and of relieving the philological text by contrast or by their poetical pictures. In the Third Part, the Extracts are subjoined, as footnotes, to the passages of the text in which the several authors are commemorated. No Extracts are presented from the Nineteenth Century. Its literary abundance and variety could not have been exemplified, either fairly or instructively, without an apparatus of specimens so bulky as to be quite inadmissible: and the books are not only more widely known, but more easily to be found, than those of preceding times.

The Second Part, offering a brief Summary of the Early History of the English Language, fills about one-seventh of the volume. It must have, through the nature of the matter, a less popular and amusing aspect than the other Parts. But the topic handled in these Philological Chapters is quite as important as those that occupy the Literary ones. The story which this Part tells, should be familiar to every one who would understand thoroughly the History of English Literature; and therefore it deserved, if it did not rather positively require, admission as an appendix to a narrative in which that History is surveyed. A knowledge of it is yet more valuable to those who desire to gain, as every one among us must if he is justly to be called a well-educated man, an exact mastery of the Science of English Grammar. The description here given of the principal steps by which our native tongue was formed, illustrates, almost in every page, some characteristic fact in our literary history, or some distinctive feature in our ordinary speech.



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# HISTORY OF ENGLISH LITERATURE.

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## INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER.

### *Periods of English History.*

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1. THE Literature of our native country, like that of every other, is related, intimately and at many points, to the History of the Nation. The great social epochs are thus also the epochs of intellectual cultivation; and, accordingly, our literary annals may be arranged in Four successive Periods.

The Roman Period, which is the first of these, is much shorter for England than for some nations of the continent. It begins only with the landing of Julius Cæsar; and it closes with the year which is usually supposed to have been the date of the earliest Germanic settlements in the island. It thus embraces five centuries.

Next comes our Anglo-Saxon Period, which, after enduring about six centuries, was brought to an end by the invasion of William the Conqueror. It corresponds with that tumultuous stage in European History, which we know by the name of the Dark Ages.

Our Third Period, beginning with the Norman Conquest, may be set down as ending with the Protestant Reformation, or at the accession of Henry the Eighth. It has thus a length of about four centuries and a half; and these, the Dark Ages having already been set apart, are the Middle Ages of England as of Europe.

From the dawn of the Reformation to the present day, there has elapsed a Period of three centuries and a half, which are the Modern Times of all Christendom.

Let us take, at the opening of these studies, a bird's-eye view of the regions thus laid down on our historical map.

The first of our four periods, having bequeathed no literary remains native to our soil, will afterwards drop out of sight. To the other three, in their order, are referable all the shorter stages into which the history of our literary progress will be subdivided; and the particular features of each of these will be comprehended the more readily, if we remember the general character of the great historical division to which it belongs.

2. A hasty glance over the Roman Period teaches two facts which we ought to know.

In the first place, the only native inhabitants of England, certainly with few exceptions, and perhaps without any, belonged to the great race of Celts. Another Celtic tribe occupied Ireland, and was spread extensively over Scotland. None of these were the true founders of the English nation: but the state of the English Celts under the Romans affected in no small degree the events which next followed.

Secondly, Rome introduced into our island many changes; yet these were fewer and less extensive than the revolutions which she worked elsewhere.

In some continental countries, of which Gaul was an instance, the Romans, forming close relations with the vanquished, diffused almost universally their institutions, habits, and speech. Their position among us was quite unlike this. It rather resembled that which, in the earliest settlements of the Europeans in India, a few armed garrisons of invaders held amidst the surrounding natives, from whom, whether they were submissive or rebellious, the foreign troops stood proudly apart. Nowhere, even when the Roman conquerors were most powerful, did there take place, between them and the Britons, any union extensive enough to alter at all materially the nationality of the people. Nowhere, accordingly, did the Latin language permanently displace the native tongues.

Still, besides the thinly scattered hordes who continued to hunt in the marshy forests, and to build their log-villages in the wilderness



for rude shelter and defence, there were a few large civic communities, to whom their military masters taught successfully both the useful arts and many of the luxuries of the south. The knowledge and tastes thus introduced among the British Celts were not uncommunicated to those vigorous invaders, whose occupation of the island speedily followed the retirement of the imperial armies.

3. The Ages which succeeded the Fall of the Roman Empire, do, in many points, well deserve their name of Dark. But the gloom which covered them was that which goes before sunrise; and bright rays of light were already breaking through.

The great event was that vast series of emigrations, which planted tribes of Gothic blood over large tracts of Europe, and established that race as sovereigns in other regions, where the population suffered but little change. The earliest stages of formation were then undergone by all the languages now spoken in European countries. Christianity, which had been made known in some quarters during the Roman Times, was professed almost universally before the Dark Ages reached their close.

Our Anglo-Saxon invaders were Goths of the Germanic or Teutonic stock. Their position in Britain was quite unlike that which had been held by the Romans. Instead of merely stationing garrisons to overawe, they planted colonies, large and many, which poured in an immense stream of population. They continued to emigrate from the continent for more than a hundred years after their first appearance; and by the end of that period they had established settlements covering a very large proportion of the island, as far northward as the shores of the Forth. Before many generations had passed away, their language, and customs, and national character, were as generally prevalent, throughout the provinces which they had seized, as the modern English tongue and its accompaniments have become in the United States.

We do not look with much hope for literary cultivation among the Anglo-Saxons. It is surprising that they should have left so many monuments of intellectual energy as they have. The fragments which are extant possess a singular value, as illustrations of the character of a very singular people: and most of them are written in that which is really our mother-tongue.

During the six hundred years of their independence, the nation made, in spite of wars, and calamities, and obstacles of all kinds, wonderful progress in the arts of life and thought. They learned much from the subdued Britons, not a little from the continent, and yet more from their own practical good-sense, guided wisely by several patriotic kings and churchmen. The pagans accepted

the Christian faith : the piratical sea-kings betook themselves to the tillage of the soil, and to the practice of some of the coarser manufactures : the fierce soldiers constructed, out of the materials of legislation common to the whole Teutonic race, a manly and systematic political constitution.

4. The Third of our Periods, here called the Middle Ages, differs strikingly from the Ages described as Dark. The latter were seemingly fruitful in nothing but undecided conflicts : now we reach a state of things quite dissimilar. The painful convulsions in which infant society had writhed, made way for the growing vigour of healthy though undisciplined youth.

All the relations of life were thenceforth modified, more or less, by two influences, predominant in the early part of the period, decaying in the latter. The one was that of Feudalism, the other that of the Church of Rome. Literature was especially nourished by the consolidation of the new Languages, which were now successively developed in all countries of Europe.

In the general history of European society, the Middle Ages are commonly held as brought to an end by two events which occurred nearly at the same time : the erection of the Great Monarchies on the ruins of Feudalism ; and the shattering of the sovereignty of the Romish Church by the Protestant Reformation. These epochs, likewise, come close to the most important fact in the annals of Literature. The Art of Printing, invented a little earlier, became widely available as a means of enlightenment about the beginning of the sixteenth century.

The Norman Conquest, which we take as the commencement of the Middle Ages for England, introduced the country, by one mighty stride, into the circle of continental Europe. Not only did it establish intimate relations between our island and its neighbours ; but, through the policy which the conquerors adopted, it subjected the nation to both of the ruling mediæval impulses. Feudalism, peremptorily introduced, metamorphosed completely the relation between the people and the nobles : the recognition of the papal supremacy altered not less thoroughly the position of the church. Neither of these changes was unproductive of good in the state of society which then prevailed. But both of them were distasteful to our nation ; both of them rapidly became, in reality, injurious both to freedom and to knowledge ; and the opposition of opinions in regard to them produced most of those civil broils, in which our kings, our clergy, our aristocracy, and our people, played parts, and engaged in combinations, so shifting and so perplexing. At length, under the dynasty of the Tudors, the ecclesiastical shackles were



cast away ; while the feudal bonds, not yet ready for unrivetting, began to be gradually slackened.

In this long series of revolutions, not a step was taken without arousing a literary echo. They gave birth to a Literature which, growing up through a period of four hundred years, claims, in all its stages and kinds, attentive and respectful consideration.

It speaks, when it adopts the living tongue, in a voice which, though rude and stammering, echoes the tones and imparts the meaning of our own ; it calls up before us, by an innocent necromancy, the perished world in which our forefathers lived, a world whose ignorance was the seed-bed of our knowledge, whose tempestuous energy cleared the foundations for our social regularity and refinement ; it issues from scenes which fancy loves to beautify, from the picturesque cloister and the dim scholastic cell, from the feudal castle blazing with knightly pomp, and the field decked for the tilt and tournament, from forests through which swept the storm of chase, and plains resounding with the shout and clang of battle. Those early monuments of mind possess, likewise, distinguished importance in the history of letters. Imperfect in form and anomalous in spirit, they were the lessons of a school whose training it was necessary for intellect to undergo, and in which our modern masters of poetry and eloquence first studied the rudiments of their art ; and among them there are not a few which, still conspicuous through the cloudy distance, are honoured by all whose praise is truly honourable, as illustrious memorials of triumphs achieved by genius over all obstacles of circumstance and time.

5. The Literature of our Middle Ages, thus singularly and variously attractive, is distinguished from that of Modern Times by several strongly marked features.

The most prominent of these is derived from its Variety of Languages. In its earliest stages it used three tongues ; French, English, and Latin : and it continued to use always the latter two.

Our Norman invaders were the descendants of an army of Norwegians, which, a hundred and fifty years before, had conquered a province of Northern France, thenceforth called Normandy. They were thus sprung from the same great Gothic race, another branch of which had sent forth the Anglo-Saxons. But they had long ago lost all vestiges of their pedigree. They had abandoned, almost universally, their own Norse tongue, and had adopted that which they found already used in Northern France, one of those dialects which sprung out of the decaying Latin. This infant language they had nursed and refined, till it was now ready to give expression to fanciful and animated poetry. In other points they had accom-

modated themselves, with like readiness, to the habits and institutions of their French home: they had changed nothing radically, but developed and improved every thing. By their fostering care of feudalism and of letters, as well as by other exertions, it was they that first guided France towards being what she afterwards became, the model and instructress of mediæval Europe.

They took possession of England, not as colonists, like the Anglo-Saxons, but as military masters, like the Romans. The Norman counts and their retainers sat in their castles, keeping down by armed power, and not without many a bloody contest, the large Saxon population that surrounded them. They suppressed the native polity by overwhelming force: they made their Norman-French the fashionable speech of the court and the aristocracy, and imposed it on the tribunals and the legislature; and their romantic literature quickly weaned the hearts of educated men from the ancient rudeness of taste. But the mass of the English people, retaining their Teutonic lineage unmixed, clung also, with the twofold obstinacy of Teutons and persecuted men, to their old ancestral tongue. The Anglo-Saxon language, passing through changes which we shall hereafter learn, yet kept its hold in substance till it was evolved into modern English; and the Norman nobles, whose ancestors had volunteered to speak like their French subjects, were at length obliged to learn the dialect which had been preserved among their despised English vassals.

While, however, the Saxon-English tongue was thus gradually displacing the Norman-French, yet, throughout the whole course of the Middle Ages, in our country as elsewhere in Europe, all the higher kinds of knowledge, and all the ripest fruits of reflection, were communicated, generally or always, in a Latin dress.

In Italy, France, and Spain, where the language of the Romans was spoken by the people for centuries, and where, as it decayed, it became the foundation of the modern speech, this practice was natural enough, and, for a time, may have been harmless. But its effects were very different in those nations whose native dialects were quite alien to the Latin, our own being one of these. The use of the dead language caused the position of such nations, in the earlier ages of Christendom, to be peculiarly unfavourable for all improvement which has to be gained through literature. At first, it is true, the native tongues being in their infancy, the Latin could not but be adopted for almost all literary works. Afterwards, when it was less urgently needed, it was adhered to with such steadiness, that the Latin literature of the Middle Ages is larger in amount, beyond calculation, than the ver-

nacular. Nor, in our own country at least, was it till the mediæval period had nearly expired, that the living tongue attained such a degree of development, as could have qualified it for entirely superseding the ancient organ of communication. For the expression of poetical and imaginative thought, the English Language was fully mature as early as the fourteenth century : as an instrument either of abstract speculation or of precise practical instruction, it continued to be imperfect for several generations afterwards.

6. This separation of languages, in the Middle Ages, was attended by other peculiarities, some of which are not less worthy of notice.

In the first place, there was a splitting up of Literature into sections, which not only treated different kinds of matter, but were designed for different audiences, and used, in part, different tongues.

The mass of our old literary relics may be described loosely as having constituted two distinct libraries. The churchmen had their books, most of which were theological or philosophical, but which contained likewise almost every thing that was to be found of systematic thinking or solid information. All these were expressed in Latin : and, in unlearned times, this one fact made all the higher kinds of knowledge to be the exclusive patrimony of the clerical profession. Overagainst the library of the ecclesiastics, animated by the spirit of the church, stood that of the laymen, the greater part of which was an embodiment of the spirit of feudalism. Nearly every book it contained, was intended for diverting or exciting the nobles and their retainers. Out of its tales of warfare and adventure grew up the chivalrous romances ; while almost all the more ambitious efforts of the mediæval poetry were mainly actuated by the same sentiments, and aimed at interesting the same class of persons. Into this aristocratic literature, it is true, the influence of the church penetrated frequently ; breathing tones of supernatural awe into much of the chivalrous poetry, or seeking to disseminate religious impressions through popularized versions of monkish traditions. But neither the clerical legend-writer, nor the knightly minstrel, was wont to look beyond the precincts of the castle-chapel and the castle-hall. The peasantry of the rural districts, vegetating in ignorance and neglect, and the citizens of the towns, slowly building themselves up in wealth and intelligence, were hardly ever thought of, either as beings whose character and destiny might furnish fit objects of poetical representation, or as classes of men amongst whom it was worth while to seek for a literary audience. The narrow temper, and the limited field of thought, which thus pervaded the vernacular literature, received a contractedness yet more decided from the circumstance already

hinted at; that, till near the close of the middle ages, our native tongue was neither used for prose writing nor fit to be so used with good effect.

Secondly, throughout the whole of the Mediæval Period, Literature wanted the inestimable advantages conferred by the Art of Printing. This deprivation involved several remarkable consequences. First of all, books, multiplied by manuscript copies only, were rare, because costly: and the fewness of books was in itself sufficient to cause fewness of readers. In fact, till the very last stages in those times, the accomplishment of reading was unusual, except among the clergy. Again, even those who could read were compelled, through the difficulty of obtaining books, to derive a great part of their literary knowledge from oral communication; and it was this that made the old universities so very important. Information thus impeded could not be generally accessible even to the clergy themselves: and the few who attained it not only learned laboriously and slowly, but, with some signal exceptions, learned inexactly and incompletely. There followed yet another result. A large proportion of the literary compositions of the middle ages were concocted, not with any view to being read, but with a distinct recollection, on the part of the writers, that they would become known only through oral delivery. Very many of them have peculiarities, which cannot be accounted for otherwise than by such an expectation. This is the case with not a few of the philosophical and theological works. Above all, the fact is a clue to much that is most strikingly distinctive in the character of the Mediæval Poetry: it is the main reason why irregularities of form prevailed so long after they might have been expected to disappear; and it shows, in great part, why an animation of manner was naturally and generally attained, after which modern art has usually striven in vain.

7. Emerging from the glimmer and gloom which alternate in the Middle Ages, we now cast our eyes along the illuminated vista of Modern History. The eye is dazzled by a multiplicity of striking objects, among which it is not always easy to distinguish those that most actively shaped and coloured the literature of the times.

We may, however, understand the facts in part; and we are beginning to prepare ourselves for so doing, when we contrast the Modern Literature with the Mediæval, in respect of those circumstances which have been observed to characterize the latter.

Ever since the close of the middle ages, the Printing-Press has been incessantly at work among us. In the very earliest time of its general use, it began to metamorphose the whole character



of Literature; and the transformation has assumed new aspects, with each new enlargement of the resources of the art. Knowledge, and eloquence, and poetry, began equally to aspire to exactness and symmetry, as soon as the abundance of books subjected them to close and constant scrutiny: and all departments of letters have been actuated by a temper more and more philanthropic and expansive, as they became able to command a wider and wider audience. Those barriers of Language also have vanished, which once rose up between the teachers and the taught. The Living Tongue of the nation, ripe for all uses in the beginning of the sixteenth century, diffused speedily the records of Divine Wisdom, and has ever since been almost the only organ of communication dreamt of by our men of letters.

Literature, thus put in possession of adequate instruments, has also had new laws to obey, and new truths to impart, and new varieties of sentiment and imagination to represent. At once prompting the times and interpreting them, and performing both functions with an energy which she could never before have attained, she has stood in the midst of a world which, from the very beginning of the Modern Period, was emancipating itself from the most powerful of the mediæval influences.

As we glance over the Modern History of our nation, we see the feudal power of the nobles waning before the concentrated strength of the crown: the monarchy, absolute while its sceptre was grasped firmly by the house of Tudor, is paralyzed by the haughty and obstinate imprudence of the Stuarts; and at length, after a struggle of two generations, our polity is moulded, at the Revolution, into the constitutional form which it now wears.

It is much less easy to gather, into one result, that extraordinary series of changes, ecclesiastical, religious, and moral, which opened with the Protestant Reformation. Theological doctrine has been purified: the relations of the church to the nation, in all the diverse aspects in which they have been regarded, are at least freed from those complications, which made the Romish hierarchy so dangerous in the latter part of the middle ages: and there has been won, slowly and painfully, a universal recognition of man's inalienable right to think on things sacred, with no responsibility but to the Omniscient Searcher of Consciences. It would be rash to say that these vast ameliorations of system have worked all the good, which a sanguine temperament might have hoped to see issuing from them. But, that the moral and religious character of society in our country has, as a whole, been incalculably improved by the Reformation, seems to be as certain as it is, that, without

that great revolution, neither our constitutional liberties nor our intellectual culture could have gained anything approaching to the development in which we now rejoice.

8. The Modern History of English Literature will, when we examine its details, be distributed into several successive Periods. For two of these, exact attention may here be bespoken, as eras especially important in the progress of our national enlightenment. The one embraces the hundred years that opened with the accession of Queen Elizabeth: the other is that in which we ourselves live, and which may be dated from the beginning of the nineteenth century.

Each of these two periods has given to our language various and abundant stores of intellectual wealth. Each of them, likewise, if compared with the times before it, will be found to have witnessed an immense increase in the diffusion of knowledge through the nation. Each of them, yet again, presents itself as an age in which intellect has been singularly active in regard to objects not lying immediately within the province of letters: and each is thus an instructive illustration of a truth which we cannot too often call to mind; namely, that there always exists, though sometimes but dimly perceptible, an intimate connexion between literature and all the elements of society.

When we allow our studies to prompt reflections such as these, we put them to one of their most profitable uses; to a use, indeed, that cannot be served by our reading of any Literary Work, so long as we regard it without reference to the time and circumstances in which it came to light.

In our perusal, doubtless, of a history or a philosophical treatise, of an august epic or a moving tragedy, we may, without looking thus widely abroad, enrich our minds with new truths and elevating contemplations, or with fancies and emotions that kindle and feed the flame of virtuous aspiration. Nor will the lighter kinds of reading be always barren of good, if the books read are not positively mischievous. Literature does in itself tend towards moral improvement, however frequently the tendency may be counteracted by the evil hearts of ourselves or our instructors. It wars against the impulses of thoughtlessness and sensualism. The present weighs us down heavily towards the earth: we are lifted upwards, though it may be but for a short way, by all that incites us to meditate on the past and the future. He to whom a book has hinted a striking general truth, or communicated a vivid poetical image, has inhaled a draught of that finer air, which every rational and accountable creature should always desire to breathe. By knowing more

clearly, or by imagining more actively, he has been prepared for feeling more purely, for wishing more nobly, perhaps also for resolving more firmly.

A gracious spirit o'er the earth presides,  
And o'er the heart of man : invisibly  
It comes, to works of unproved delight,  
And tendency benign, directing those  
Who care not, know not, think not, what they do !

Yet the lessons to be learned from Literature have not been received either completely or altogether safely, until we have accustomed ourselves to think of all its monuments in their Historical Relations.

The most illustrious masterpieces of genius are not justly valued, unless we know both the facilities which encouraged them and the obstacles which they overcame. The most energetic achievements of the seekers after truth are not fitly honoured, unless we have marked the errors which they rooted out, and the extent to which their teaching was effectual. The most sublime of the moral representations exhibited in eloquence and poetry do not exert their whole power over us, unless we have qualified ourselves for conceiving the character of the external impulses by which they were affected, and for noting how far they were able to act on the minds of their own and following times. It is further true, that, when the historical view is taken, a real importance is found to be possessed by many literary effusions, so unsubstantial as not to deserve permanent celebrity, or so faulty in their ethics that they ought not to meet the eye of youthful students. Such productions often require and reward a passing notice ; as being sometimes symptoms indicating, and sometimes causes producing, degeneracy of taste or of morals, in the age that gave them birth, or in the class of readers for which they were framed.

Thoughts yet more comprehensive and more serious dawn and brighten on us, when we regard the History of English Literature as a whole ; when we reflect on it as a magnificent series of events, concurrent with those wonderful changes that have successively impressed themselves on the face of society. We then perceive, in one of its most signal instances, this great truth ; that, notwithstanding all shortcomings and aberrations, the progress of literary culture keeps pace, partly as cause partly as effect, with the progress of the nations of the earth towards that renovation of man's spiritual nature, which Christianity has been divinely appointed to create. Nor, when this reflection has arisen, can it fail to be accompanied by others. We are reminded that Literature is necessarily

a moral power, a power modifying the character of mankind, and aiding in the determination of their position now and hereafter: a solemn and widely-reaching truth, which ought also to teach every individual among us, how unspeakably important it is, that the books we read be wisely selected. We are reminded, also, that the capacities which bestow this responsible function on the records of intellect, are conferred by that Omnipotent Father of our spirits, who rules the thoughts and acts of all His intelligent creatures: and this thought, the most elevated of all which our studies suggest, cannot but inspire humble and reverential gratitude for the goodness of Him, from whom we receive knowledge, and intellectual enjoyment, and life, and all things.

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In the preparation of this little Manual of Literary History, it has been a duty to collect facts and opinions from many and various sources; and it would be a duty not less pleasant to cite these often and thankfully. But, in such a volume, a large array of notes and references would be both inconvenient and needless.

Some of the most valuable of those works, in which particular sections of our Literature are treated either historically or critically, will be named in the text, or noted as furnishing us with instructive quotations.

The History of English Literature, in all its periods and kinds, is given, with many specimens and valuable criticisms, in two excellent text-books, composed for popular use: Chambers' "Cyclopædia of English Literature," 2 volumes, large 8vo, 1843-44; and Craik's "Sketches of the History of Literature and Learning in England," 6 volumes 18mo, 1844-45. These, in fact, are as yet the only works, of any class, in which the whole field is minutely surveyed. An acquaintance with them will do very much towards filling up in the student's mind, profitably and agreeably, the elementary outline here presented to him.



## PART FIRST.

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### LITERATURE IN THE DARK AND MIDDLE AGES.

A. D. 449—A. D. 1509.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE ANGLO-SAXON TIMES.

A. D. 449—A. D. 1066.

#### SECTION FIRST: LITERATURE IN THE CELTIC AND LATIN TONGUES.

1. The Four Languages used in Literature—Latin and Anglo-Saxon—The Two Celtic Tongues—The Welsh—The Irish and Scottish Gaelic.—**CELTIC LITERATURE.** 2. Gaelic Literature—Irish Metrical Relics and Prose Chronicles—Scottish Metrical Relics—Ossian.—3. Welsh Literature—The Triads—Supposed Fragments of the Bards—Romances—Legends of King Arthur.—**LATIN LITERATURE.** 4. Introduction of Christianity—Saint Patrick—Columba—Augustine.—5. Learned Men—Superiority of Ireland—Intercourse with the Continent—The Anglo-Saxons in Rome.—6. The Four Great Names of the Times—Alcuin and Erigena—Bede and Alfred—Latin Learning among the Anglo-Saxons.

1. DURING the Anglo-Saxon times, four languages were used for literary communication in the British islands.

Latin was the organ of the church and of learning, here as elsewhere, throughout the Dark and Middle Ages. Accordingly, till we reach Modern Times, we cannot altogether overlook the literature which was expressed in it, if we would acquire a full idea of the progress of intellectual culture.

Of the other three languages, all of which were national and living, one was the Anglo-Saxon, the monuments of which, with its

history, will soon call for close scrutiny. The second and third were Celtic tongues, spoken by the communities of that race who still possessed large parts of the country. These, with their scanty stock of literary remains, must receive some attention at present ; although they will be left out of view when we pass to those later periods, in which the Germanic population became decisively predominant in Great Britain.

The first of the Celtic tongues has oftenest been called Erse or Gaelic. It was common, with dialectic varieties only, to the Celts of Ireland and those of Scotland. Ireland was wholly occupied by tribes of this stock, except some small Norse settlements on the seacoast. Whether Scotland, beyond the Forth and Clyde, was so likewise, is a question not to be answered, until it shall have been determined whether the Picts, the early inhabitants of the eastern Scottish counties, were Celts or Goths. It is certain, at least, that, either before the Norman Conquest or soon afterwards, the Celtic Scots were confined within limits corresponding nearly with those which now bound their descendants.

And here, while we are looking beyond the Anglo-Saxon frontiers, it is to be noted that the Romans did not conquer any part of Ireland, and that their hold on the north and west of Scotland had been so slight as to leave hardly any appreciable effects.

The second Celtic tongue, that of the Cymrians or ancient Britons, has been preserved in the Welsh. Its seats, during the Anglo-Saxon period, were the provinces which were still held by Britons, quite independent or imperfectly subdued. Accordingly, it was universally used in Wales, and, for a long time, in Cornwall ; and, for several centuries, it kept its hold in the petty kingdoms of Cumbria and Strathclyde, extending to the Clyde from the middle of Lancashire, and thus covering the north-west of England and the south-west of Scotland.

We have not time to study the history of Galloway, situated in Strathclyde, but long occupied chiefly by Gaelic Celts ; nor that of the Hebrides and other islands, disputed for centuries between the Gaelic Celts and the Northmen.

#### CELTIC LITERATURE.

2. Of the two Celtic nations whose living tongue was the Erse, Ireland had immeasurably the advantage, in the success with which its vernacular speech was applied to uses that may be called literary.

To others must be left the task of estimating rightly the genuine-

ness, as well as the poetical merit, of the ancient Metrical relics still extant in the Irish language. They consist of many Bardic Songs and Historical Legends. Some of these are asserted to be much older than the ninth century, the close of which was the date of the legendary collection called the Psalter of Cashel, still surviving, and probably in its genuine shape. Competent critics have admitted the great historical value of the Prose Chronicles, preserved to this day, which grew up, by the successive additions of many generations, in the monasteries of the "Island of Saints." In the form in which these now exist, none of them seems to be so ancient as the Annals compiled by Tigernach, who died in the close of the eleventh century; but it is believed, on good grounds, that, both in this work, in the Annals of the Five Masters, and in several such local records as the Annals of Ulster and Innisfallen, there are incorporated the substance, and often the very words, of many chronicles composed much earlier. It does not thus appear rash to say, that the Irish possess contemporary histories of their country, written in the language of the people, and authentic though meagre, from the fifth century or little later. No other nation of modern Europe is able to make a similar boast.

Nor does it appear that the Scottish Celts can point to literary monuments of any kind, having an antiquity at all comparable to this. Indeed their social position was, in all respects, much below that of their western kinsmen. All the earliest relics of their language are Metrical. Such is the Albanic Duan, an historical poem, described as possessing a bardic and legendary character, and said to belong to the eleventh century. The poems which bear the name of Ossian are professedly celebrations, by an eye-witness, of events occurring in the third century. But, though we were to throw out of view the modern patchwork which disguises the original from the English reader, and though likewise we should hesitate to assert positively that the Fingalic tales were really borrowed from Ireland, it is still impossible to satisfy oneself that any pieces, now exhibited as the groundwork of the poems, have a just claim to so remote an origin. All such productions seem to be merely attempts, some of them exceedingly imaginative and spirited, to invest with poetical and mythical glory the legends of generations which had passed away long before the poet's time.

3. The literature of the Cymric Celts becomes an object of lively interest, through our familiarity with circumstances relating to it, which occurred in the Middle Ages. We seek eagerly, among the fallen fragments of British poetry and history, for the foundations of the magnificent legend, which, in the days of chivalry, was built

up to immortalize King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table. We desire to trace upward, till the dim distance hides it, the memory of those Welsh bards, who, in the decay of their country, were the champions, and at last the martyrs, of national freedom.

Ancient Welsh writings, still extant, are described as dealing intelligently, both in prose and verse, with a wonderful variety of topics. It is not universally admitted that any of these were composed earlier than the twelfth century: but it is probable, from evidence both external and internal, that some are much older.

There is a marked character of primitive antiquity in the singular pieces called the Triads. They are collections of historical facts, maxims ethical and legal, mythological doctrines and traditions, and rules for the structure of verse: all of them are expressed with extreme brevity, and regularly disposed in groups of three. Among the Welsh Metrical pieces, those of the times succeeding the Norman Conquest are very numerous; but a few are to be found which have plausibly been assigned to celebrated bards of the sixth century. It is pleasant to believe that the great Taliessin still speaks to us from his grave; that we read the poems of Aneurin, the heroic and unfortunate prince of Cumbria and Strathclyde; and that, in the verses of Merdhin the Caledonian, we possess relics of the sage and poet, whom the reverence of later ages transformed into the enchanter Merlin. The romantic impression is strengthened by the earnest simplicity, and the spirit of pathetic lamentation, with which some of these irregular lyrics chant the calamities of the Cymrians. There exists likewise a considerable stock of old Welsh Romances, the most remarkable of which are contained in the series called the Mabinogi or Tales of Youth. Most of those that have been translated into English, such as Peredur and the Lady of the Fountain, are merely versions from some of the finest of the Norman-French romances. But several others, as the stories of Prince Pwyll and Math the Enchanter, are very similar to the older Norse sagas; and these, if not very ancient in their present shape, must have sprung from the traditions of an exceedingly rude and early generation.

Frequently, both in the triads and in the bardic songs, allusions are made to the heroic Arthur. A Cymric prince of Wales or Cumbria, surrounded by patriotic warriors like himself, and valiantly resisting the alien enemies of his country, had, in many a battle, triumphantly carried the Dragon-flag of his race into the heart of the hosts amidst whom floated the Pale Horse of the Saxon standard. At length, we are told, he died by domestic treason; and the flower of the British nobles perished with him. His name was cherished with melancholy pride, and his heroism magnified

with increasingly fond exaggeration, alike among those Welsh Britons who still guarded the valleys of Snowdon, and among those who, having sought a foreign seat of liberty, wandered in exile on the banks of the Loire. Poetic chroniclers among the Cymrians of Brittany gradually wove the scattered and embellished traditions into a legendary British history: this Armoric compilation was used, perhaps with traditions also that had lingered in Wales, by Geoffrey of Monmouth, in the twelfth century, as the groundwork of a Latin historical work; and then the poets of chivalry, allured by the beauty and pathos of the tale, made it for ages the centre of the most animated pictures of romance.

## LATIN LITERATURE.

4. The Latin learning of the Dark Ages, though seldom extensive or exact, and always confined to a very small circle of students, formed a point of contact between the instructed men of the several races. Its cultivation arose out of the introduction of Christianity; and its most valued uses were those which related to the faith and the church.

It is doubtful at what time the seeds of spiritual life were first scattered on our island shores. Miracles were said to have attested the preaching of Joseph of Arimathea in England; and a cave which still looks, from the cliffs of Fifeshire, over the eastern sea, was celebrated as the oratory whence, towards the close of the fourth century, the Greek Saint Regulus went forth to christianize the Picts. It is better proved that there were British converts among the martyrs in the persecution of Diocletian; and that, not much later, Irishmen, such as the heretical Pelagius, were to be found in the continental churches. But any progress which the true faith may have made among our forefathers, in the Roman times, seems to have been arrested by the anarchy and bloodshed which everywhere attended the Germanic invasions.

Ireland, in which Saint Patrick's teaching is said to have begun a few years before the middle of the fifth century, certainly led the way to the general acceptance of Christianity; and the conversion of Britain was first attempted by Irish missionaries. Among these, Saint Columba is especially named, as having, in the latter half of the sixth century, founded his celebrated monastery in the sacred isle of Iona, from which he and his disciples and successors extended their preaching in the west and north of Scotland. About the end of the same century, Saint Augustine arrived in England, sent by Pope Gregory, who, according to the beautiful story told



by the old historians, had been deeply moved by seeing Anglo-Saxon youths exposed in the slave-market of Rome. For several generations before the Norman conquest, Great Britain and Ireland were, in name at least, universally Christian.

5. Almost all who then cultivated Latin learning were ecclesiastics; and by far the larger number of those who became eminent in it were unquestionably Irishmen. Most of them are described by old writers as Scots: but this name was first applied to the Irish Celts, and was not transferred to the inhabitants of North Britain till after the Dark Ages. Indeed, amidst the bloodshed and wanderings which accompanied and followed the fall of the Roman Empire, Ireland was a place of rest and safety, both to fugitives from the continent, and to others from England. Among the latter is named Gildas the Wise, a brother of the British bard Aneurin, and the supposed writer of a treatise "on the Destruction of Britain," which, if it were undoubtedly genuine, would be the oldest of our Latin histories. Thus adding the acquisitions of other countries to its own, the Green Isle contained, for more centuries than one, a larger amount of learning than all that could have been collected from the rest of Europe; and its scholars often found other sanctuaries among the storm-defended rocks of the Hebrides.

It is a fact well deserving the attention of the student, that the communication between distant countries, thus arising out of the miseries incident to troublous times, received a new impulse as each country adopted the Christian faith. All were thenceforth members of one ecclesiastical community; and each maintained connexion, both with the rest, and with Rome the common centre. It does indeed appear, that the Anglo-Saxon church was much less dependent on the papal see than many others, in respect both of government and of doctrine: yet, from an early date, its intercourse with Italy was close and constant. Pilgrimages to Rome were exceedingly common. Two, if not more, of the Saxon princes assumed the cowl, and were buried in the precincts of the church of Saint Peter: among the hospices for the reception of pilgrims, which were built around the venerated spot, that of our countrymen was one of the earliest: and the Anglo-Saxon fraternity, (technically described in the old books as a school,) received corporate privileges from the popes, and is honourably commemorated as having repeatedly given valiant aid in the defence of the city. Alfred is said to have sent alms every year to Rome, receiving, in return, not only relics, but other and more valuable gifts: and he invited foreign ecclesiastics to settle in his kingdom, and assist in his attempts to revive learning among the native clergy. Religious zeal thus produced an

interchange of knowledge, which, in times almost without commerce, and in a state of society making travelling difficult and dangerous, could not otherwise have taken place.

6. Thus, though our nation lost some of her best and ablest sons, through the frequent disturbances which chequered her history, she gained other instructors, whose services counterbalanced the loss.

Many of our native churchmen, it is true, lived chiefly abroad; but our churches and schools received very many foreigners. So, in the seventh century, the most active promoters of erudition among the Anglo-Saxons were the Abbot Adrian, an African sent from Naples, and the Archbishop Theodore, a native of Tarsus who had been a monk at Rome. So, likewise, on the other hand, two of the four men, whose names hold decisively the highest places in the literary roll of our ancient ancestry, gave the benefit of their talents to foreign lands. England retained Bede and Alfred; but she lost Alcuin and Erigena. Alcuin, perhaps an Irishman, though educated at York, taught and wrote in the dominions of Charlemagne. Joannes Scotus Erigena, again, remarkable alike as almost the only learned layman of the Dark Ages, and as the only thinker who then attained original views in speculative philosophy, was almost certainly a native of Ireland. But France was the principal scene of his labours; and neither his invitation to England by Alfred, nor his tragical death in that country, can be held as any thing more than doubtful traditions.

Among those native ecclesiastics who remained in England, three men only can here be named as eminent for success in Latin studies. The oldest of these was Bishop Aldhelm, a southern Saxon, whose zeal for the enlightenment of the people gives him a better title to fame, than the specimens which have been produced from his Latin prose and verse; another was Asser, a Welsh monk of St David's, the friend, and teacher, and affectionate biographer of the illustrious Alfred; and greater than any of these was the Northumbrian Bede, whose name receives by immemorial custom an epithet expressing

b. 672.	} well-merited reverence.	The Venerable Bede, entering in
d. 735.		

boyhood the monastery of Wearmouth, in his native district, spent his whole manhood in the neighbouring cells of Jarrow, zealously occupied in ecclesiastical and historical research. His extant writings are allowed to exhibit an extent of classical scholarship, and a correctness of taste, surprising for his time: and his investigations into the antiquities of the country gave birth to his Ecclesiastical History of England, which is to this day a leading authority, not for the annals of the church only, but for all the public events that occurred in the earlier part of the Anglo-Saxon period.

The Anglo-Saxon names which have thus been set down are very few: and the nation really did not possess, in any period, many men who at all deserved to be described as learned. From the age of Bede to that of Alfred, we encounter hardly any evidence of so much as moderate erudition; and this great man had to undertake a task, which really amounted to something very like the instruction of a people altogether ignorant. We shall learn immediately that the method which he and his assistants adopted, for enlightening their countrymen, led them to promote Latin learning to no further extent, than that which was absolutely required for enabling them to master some of the most important items of the knowledge recorded in the dead language. Their leading aim was the cultivation of their mother-tongue, and the diffusion of practical information through its means.

It is also a fact to be remembered, that the classical learning of Alfred's age, such as it was, did not long survive its founder. In this respect, not less than in others, the last few generations of the Anglo-Saxon period exhibit unequivocal symptoms of decay.

Some of the causes which brought about this decline, should be kept in our view while we proceed to survey the vernacular literature of the nation. Hardly more than barbarians when they landed in our island, the Anglo-Saxons were checked in their progress towards civilisation by their continual wars against the Britons, and still more by their own divisions and contests. At length, when the chiefs of one of their petty states had been recognised as kings of Saxon England, the polity thus established was shaken to its foundations, by the long struggle they had to maintain against their Gothic kinsmen from Scandinavia. The conquest of the country by the Danish prince Canute presaged the ease with which the race was to be subdued by William of Normandy.



## CHAPTER II.

## THE ANGLO-SAXON TIMES.

A. D. 449—A. D. 1066.

## SECTION SECOND : LITERATURE IN THE ANGLO-SAXON TONGUE.

1. Usual Course of Early National Literature.—2. Peculiar Character of Anglo-Saxon Literature—Its Causes.—POETRY. 3. National and Historical Poems—The Tale of Beowulf—Other Specimens.—4. Poems Didactic and Religious—Extant Specimens—Cædmon's Life and Poems.—5. Versification and Style of Anglo-Saxon Poetry.—PROSE. 6. The Living Language freely used—Translations from the Scriptures.—7. Original Composition—Homilies—Miscellaneous Works—The Saxon Chronicle.—8. King Alfred—His Works—His Character.

1. THE Literature of the Anglo-Saxons has a very peculiar character; and that because it was formed by a process which was not only unusual, but also in certain respects artificial.

The natural development of literary cultivation among a people commonly takes place in some such manner as this.

The earliest effusions that appear are metrical in form, and almost always historical in matter. The effects, too, which they are designed to produce on those to whom they are addressed are complex: for, besides striving to cause the imaginative pleasure which is characteristic of poetry, they aim also at that communication of instruction, and that passionate excitement, which in more refined times are sought chiefly through the medium of prose. The artless verses which constitute this infant literature, have, in most countries, been composed without being written down. Further progress is difficult, if not impossible, until the preservation of literary works by writing has long given opportunity for the attentive and critical study of them. Such study leads to the next great step in improvement, which is the use of prose, that is, language not metrically modulated. It is adopted in those literary efforts which aim principally at the imparting or preserving of knowledge, or at such other practical purposes as are least akin to the poetical: and it is only when

prose has come into free use, that the several kinds of composition begin to be separated according to their diversity of purpose. So long, indeed, as prose writing is unknown, history itself is not faithful to its distinctive function of truly recording acts and events; and every thing like philosophy, or the systematic inferring of principles from facts, is of course unattainable. But the setting forth of abstract truths is hardly ever recognised as the proper duty of any literary work, until enlightenment has proceeded very far: histories long continue to be the principal works composed in prose: and poems, whether they are in form narrative, dramatic, or lyrical, are imaginative and impassioned in tone, for ages before they become essentially meditative or didactic.

Such has been, in substance, the early progress of literature in almost all the nations of Christendom. But such was not its early progress among our Germanic ancestors.

2. The Anglo-Saxons neglected almost utterly those ancestral legends, which were at once the poetry and the history of their contemporaries. They avoided, indeed, almost always (at least in such relics as survive to us) the choice of national themes for poetry, preferring to poetize ethical reflections, and religious doctrines or narratives. Their instructed men wrote easily in prose, at a time when other living languages were still entangled in the trammels of verse: they embodied, in rough but lucid phrases, practical information and every-day shrewdness, while the continental Teutons were treating literature merely as an instrument for the expression of impassioned fancy: and many of them deliberately renounced the ambition of originality, to execute, for the good of their people, industrious translations from the classics, the fathers of the church, and the Holy Scriptures.

Our progenitors thus constructed, in their native tongue, a series of literary monuments, to which a parallel is altogether wanting, not only among the nations of the same period, but among all others in the same stage of social advancement.

Their poetical relics, it must be allowed, are not the most attractive we can find. They want alike the pathos which inspires the bardic songs of the vanquished Cymrians, the exulting imagination which reigns in the sagas of the North, and the dramatic life which animates, everywhere, the legendary tales that light up the dim beginnings of a people's history. Their prose works, too, when they are in substance original, are plainly no more than strainings at a task, which could not be adequately performed with the language or the knowledge they possessed. But the literature which thus neither excites by images of barbarism, nor soothes by the refine-

ments of art, possesses legitimate claims to respect and admiration, in the elevation and far-sightedness of the aims which determined its character, and in the calm strength, and the moral and religious purity, which, singly or united, breathe through its principal relics.

The truth is, that both the verse and the prose of almost all our Anglo-Saxon remains differed, both in origin and in purpose, from the specimens of a similar age that have come down to us from other nations. They were produced by the best-instructed men of the times, who desired, by means of their works, to improve the social condition of their country, and to ennoble the character and sentiments of their countrymen.

The vernacular poetry, with very little exception, was not framed either by genealogical bards, or by wandering minstrels; it was not designed either to cherish national pride, or to excite the fancy, or to whet the barbaric thirst for blood. Some such poetry, the only kind that was known among their neighbours, they unquestionably had. Specimens of it have reached us; but they are so few, and wear so little of a national air, that the stock to which they belonged must have been very small, and calculated to produce very trifling effects.

The prose, again, communicated, to the people at large, knowledge which elsewhere its possessors would have sealed up in a dead language, to be transmitted only from convent to convent, or from the ecclesiastical pupils of one school to those of another.

Altogether, the Anglo-Saxon literature is strongly and interestingly symptomatic of that practical coolness of temper, and that inclination to look exclusively towards the present and the future, which marked the whole history of the race, and which one is half-tempted to consider as foreshowing the spirit that was to bear rule among their modern offspring.

#### ANGLO-SAXON POETRY.

3. The general idea which we have thus gained of the literature of our mother-tongue, will be made more distinct by a few examples, the metrical monuments being studied first, and the prose afterwards.

We possess three Historical Poems, all of which record Teutonic recollections of the continent, and must have been composed before the beginning of the emigrations to England. The Gleeman's Song, a piece very valuable to the antiquary, proves its remote origin both by the character of its geographical traditions, and by its bare and prosaic rudeness. The poem on the Battle of Fins-

burgh relates, with great animation, a story of exterminating slaughter, the place of which is doubtful, but certainly must be sought somewhere among the continental seats of the Anglo-Saxons. The Tale of Beowulf, a legend containing more than six thousand lines, is not only the most bulky, but by far the most interesting of the group. It presents a highly spirited and picturesque series of semi-romantic scenes, curiously illustrative of the early Gothic manners and superstitions. It is essentially a Norse saga; and its scene appears to be laid entirely in Scandinavia. Its hero, a Danish prince, goes out, somewhat in the guise of a knight-errant, on two adventures. In the first of these he slays a fiendish cannibal, encountering supernatural perils both on land and in the bosom of the waters, and overcoming them by superhuman strength and enchanted weapons: in the other, he sacrifices his own life in destroying a frightful earthdrake or dragon.

It may be instructive to note, in passing, how common are stories like these in all early poetry, and how naturally they spring out of the real occurrences of primitive history. When, after a contest between two rude tribes, the conquerors, wanting authentic records, have had time to forget the particular facts, they willingly exaggerate the glory of their victory, by imagining their vanquished enemies to have possessed extraordinary strength or to have been assisted by superhuman protectors. Thus arise tales of giants, and such inventions as those which adorn the first of Beowulf's exploits. So, likewise, the earliest occupants of uninhabited tracts, even in our own country, may have had to destroy wild animals, which to them were actually not less formidable than the monsters described so frightfully in the legends. Hardy woodsmen, who extirpated the noxious reptiles of some neighbouring swamp, were probably the originals of that long train of dragon-killers, which, (to say nothing of the classical Hercules,) begins with our Anglo-Saxon poem, and attends us through the series of the chivalrous romances. The slaying of wild boars is commemorated, as a useful service to the community, in our old historical memorials as well as in the stories of knight-errantry: and the fierce bisons, whose skeletons are still sometimes disinterred from our soil, were enemies dangerous enough to give importance to such adventures, as that in which the "dun cow" is said to have been destroyed by the famous knight Guy of Warwick.

That the continental memorials just described were preserved by the minstrels of England, is proved by some features, both of language and of manners, which show them, especially the Beowulf, to have undergone the kind of changes naturally taking place in

poems orally transmitted from age to age. But no other works of their class and date have been preserved.

Poems celebrating public or warlike events, if called forth at all by the wars with the Britons or with the earlier Danish invaders, have not reached our hands. Our only other specimens of the kind belong to the tenth century, which gives us several. One is a vigorous song on Athelstan's victory over the Northmen, Britons, and Scots, at Brunanburgh; there are two pieces commemorating the coronation and death of Edgar; and the finest of all is the spirited and picturesque poem which relates the fall of the brave chief Byrthnoth at Maldon, in battle against a powerful army of Danes and Norwegians.

4. Meanwhile, from the time when the tumult and warfare of the colonization had subsided, the language received numerous metrical contributions of a different class. The distant echoes of the heathen past had almost died away, lingering doubtless among the superstitions of the people, but never heard in the literature which then arose, and which spoke with the gentler voice of Christianity and infant civilisation. The poems in which these sentiments found vent belong to the seventh, ninth, and tenth centuries. A very large proportion of them are religious; and all are more or less reflective. Even the many which are professedly translations treat their originals with a freedom, which leaves them a claim to be regarded as in part invented.

Among them are metrical lives of saints, prayers, hymns, and paraphrases of Scripture; and there is at least one poem, the Tale of Judith, in which incidents from the bible-history are woven into a narrative poem strikingly fanciful. In the ethical class, we find such works as the Allegory of the Phoenix (expanded from a Latin model), a quaintly fine poem on Death, and an Address by the Departed Soul to the Body, which was repeatedly imitated in subsequent times.

The most remarkable of the religious poems are those attributed d. ab. }  
680. } to the Northumbrian Cædmon, who lived in the latter part of the seventh century. His poetic vein came to light in a singular fashion. Employed as a servant of the monastery at Whitby, he passed his best days without instruction, nourishing the love of sacred song, but unable to give expression to the images and feelings that possessed him, or even to find voice for chanting hymns or ballads composed by others. Mortified, one evening, by having to remain silent in a company of rustics more musical or less modest, he retreated to his humble lodging in the abbey-grange. In his troubled sleep, a stranger, appearing to him, commanded,



without admitting his excuses, that he should sing of the Beginning of Created Things. Original verses flowed to the dreamer's tongue, were remembered when he awoke, and recited with a new-born confidence. The natural ebullition of untutored fancy was hailed as a miracle; and Cædmon, receiving some education, was enrolled among the monks, and spent the remainder of his life in writing religious poetry. His dream-song, preserved by Alfred, is more coherent than Coleridge's verses of similar origin, but has none of their fanciful richness.

Other works of his, which we still possess, though probably neither in perfect purity nor at all complete, are inspired by a noble tone of solemn imagination. Their bulk in all is nearly equal to half of the *Paradise Lost*; to which some parts of them bear, not only in story but in thought, such a distant resemblance, as may exist between the fruits of lofty genius guided by knowledge and art, and those of genius allied in character if not in degree, but lamed by ignorance and want of constructive skill. They are narrative poems, handling scriptural events, but using the original in most places as loosely as it is used by Milton. Perhaps they were intended to make up one consecutive story: but, as we have them, they present several obvious blanks, and may most conveniently be regarded as falling into no more than two parts, the one dealing with events from the Old Testament, and the other taking up the New.

The First Part, beginning with the Expulsion of the Rebel Angels, follows the Bible History, from the Creation and the Fall of Man till it reaches the Offering up of Isaac. It then passes suddenly to a full narrative of the Exodus from Egypt, and thence, with like abruptness, to the Life of Daniel. At this point we may hold the First Part as coming to a close. The Second Part is much shorter; and its divisions are so ill-connected that we can hardly suppose it to be more than a fragment. It opens with a conference of Lucifer and his attendant Spirits, held in their place of punishment. Miltonic in more features than one, this very animated scene is introduced with a very different purpose, and breathes a very different spirit, from the corresponding scene in our great Epic. The speakers are full of horror and despair: their last hope has been shattered by the Incarnation: and the passage serves merely as a prelude to the next narrative, which represents the Saviour's Descent to Hades, an event long holding a prominent place in the popular theology of our ancestors. The Deliverer reascends, bearing with him redeemed souls from Adam to the time of the Advent: and among these, it may be noticed, Eve for a moment lingers



behind to confess her sin; just as, in Michael Angelo's celebrated picture of the Last Day, she hides her face from the Judge. The poem next describes briefly the Saviour's stay on earth after the resurrection: and it closes with the Ascension, and a kind of prophetic delineation of the Day of Judgment.

5. Both the Versification of the Anglo-Saxon poetry, and its Style, are too peculiar to be left altogether unnoticed.

The melody is regulated, like that of our modern verse, by syllabic emphasis or accent, not by quantity, as in the classical metres. The feet oftenest occurring are dactyls and trochees; a point of difference from the modern tongue, whose words fall most readily into iambs. Rhyme is used in but few of the surviving pieces. Instead of it, they have what is called alliteration, which consists in the introduction, into the same stanza, of several syllables beginning with the same letter. It seems to be a universal law of the system, that each complete stanza shall be a couplet containing two verses or sections, in each of which there must be at least one accented syllable beginning with the same letter which begins one of those in the other: while more usually the first verse has two of the alliterative syllables. The length of the couplets varies much; but most of them have from four to six accents.

The style is highly elliptical, omitting especially the connecting particles. It is full of harsh inversions and of obscure metaphors: and there occurs, very frequently, an odd kind of repetition, which has been shown to depend, in many instances, on a designed parallelism between the successive members of each sentence.

None of these features owed its origin to the Anglo-Saxons. Both the alliterative metres, and the strained and figurative diction, were derived from their continental ancestors, and are exemplified, though less decidedly, in the older poetry of the Northmen.

#### ANGLO-SAXON PROSE.

6. The metrical composition of the Anglo-Saxons is not more remarkable for its anxious and obscure elaboration, than their prose for its straight-forward and perspicuous simplicity. The uses, indeed, to which Prose Writing was put among them, were almost always of a practical cast.

The preference of the Anglo-Saxon tongue over the Latin was very marked, especially after the impulse had been given by Alfred; to whose time, and those that succeeded, belong almost all our extant specimens of prose. Matters of business, which would not have been recorded in the language of the time in any other country,

then or for centuries afterwards, were almost always so recorded in England. This was the case with charters, leases, and the like documents: it was the case, also, with ecclesiastical constitutions, and with the code of laws which was digested by Alfred, and again promulgated with alterations by several of his successors.

Among prose works claiming a literary character, the original compositions are far less numerous than the translations from the Latin, in many of which, however, the writers freely insert matter of their own. None of these invite our attention so forcibly as the versions of parts of the Scriptures. There is still preserved, in several manuscripts, a Latin Psalter, with an interlined Anglo-Saxon translation, partly metrical; there are translations and paraphrases of the Gospels, with which comments are intermixed; and there are versions of some historical books of the Old Testament.

Several distinguished men are named as having laboured in this sacred task: the Psalms are said to have been translated by Bishop Aldhelm; the Gospel of Saint John by Bede; and the Psalms or other books by Alfred, or rather by the ecclesiastics who were about him. But we cannot say positively who were the authors of any of the existing versions; unless it has been rightly inferred that

*a. 1006.* } the Heptateuch, which has been published, was a work of  
 } Ælfric, who was archbishop of Canterbury in the close of  
 the tenth century. This, however, we do know; that, although the  
 Mæso-Gothic version of the Gospels was older than any of ours, the  
 Anglo-Saxon translations came next in date; and that they pre-  
 ceded, by several generations, all other attempts of the sort made  
 in any of the new languages of Europe.

7. Among the original compositions in prose, is a large stock of Homilies or Sermons. Eighty of these were written by the venerable Ælfric, already named; and he, in the times of the Protestant Reformation, was appealed to as having in some of them combated the doctrines of the Church of Rome. He has bequeathed to us also more than one theological treatise, a Latin Grammar, a Glossary, and probably a curious Manual of Astronomy. He is, however, the only man named, as having, after the time of Alfred, been eminent in the cultivation of the vernacular tongue. A good many anonymous works interest us chiefly as illustrative of the state of thinking and knowledge. Such are treatises on geography, medicine, and medical botany; (in which magical spells play a leading part;) a series of arithmetical problems; whimsical collections of riddles; and a singular dialogue between Solomon and Saturn, seemingly designed for use as a catechism, and extant in more shapes than one.

If the relics now briefly described have their chief importance, merely as showing what our ancestors knew or wished to know, there is one monument of their prose literature from which, rude and meagre as it is, modern scholars have derived specific and valuable instruction. It is a series of historical records, usually arranged together, under the name of *The Saxon Chronicle*. Registers of public occurrences were kept in several of the religious houses, much in the same way as the *Irish Annals*; the practice beginning perhaps as early as the time of Alfred, when such a record is said to have been carried on under the direction of the primate Plegmund. For the earlier periods, the chroniclers appear to have borrowed freely from each other, or from common sources; but in the later times each of them set down, from his own knowledge, the great events of his own time. Our extant *Saxon Chronicle* is made up from the manuscripts of several such conventual records, all of them in some places identical, but each containing much that is not found in the rest. They close at different dates, the most recent being brought down to the year 1154.

b. 849, } 8. Our survey of Anglo-Saxon literature may fitly be  
d. 901. } closed with the illustrious name of Alfred;

The pious Alfred, king to Justice dear,  
Lord of the harp and liberating spear!

The ninth century in England must be held in abiding reverence, if it had given birth to no distinguished man but him alone. From him went forth, over an ignorant and half-barbarous people, a spirit of moral strength, and a thirst for rational enlightenment, which worked marvels in the midst of the most formidable difficulties, and whose effects were checked only by that flood of national calamity which, rising ominously during his life, soon swept utterly away the ripening harvest of Saxon civilisation.

His original compositions were very inconsiderable. His favourite literary employment was that of rendering, into his native tongue, the Latin works from which mainly his own knowledge was derived; works understood by very few among his countrymen, and confessedly understood so imperfectly by himself, that his translations are to be regarded as the joint work of himself and his instructors. The books selected, as the objects of his chief efforts, indicate strongly his union of practical judgment, of serious and elevated sentiment, and of eager desire for the improvement of society. Thus, besides the labours on the Scriptures which he performed or encouraged, he translated selections from the *Soliloquies* of Saint Augustine of Hippo, the *Treatise* of Gregory the Great on the Duties

of the Clergy, the Ecclesiastical History of Bede, the Ancient History of Orosius, and the work of Boethius on the Consolation of Philosophy. Often, in dealing with these works, he was not a mere translator. If a passage of his author suggested a fact known to himself, or an apt train of reflection, the fact or the thought was added to the original, or substituted for it. Thus he incorporates devout reflection and prayer of his own with his extracts from Saint Austin; to the geographical portion of Orosius he adds an outline of the state of Germany, wonderfully accurate for his opportunities, and gives also accounts, taken from the mouths of the adventurers, of a voyage to the Baltic, and another towards the North Pole; and the finely thoughtful eloquence of the last of the philosophic Romans prompts to the Teutonic king long passages of meditation, not unworthy either of the model or of the theme.

It is probably impossible for us moderns to estimate justly the resolute patience of Alfred; because we can hardly, by any stretch of conception, represent to ourselves strongly enough the obstacles which, in his time and country, impeded for all men both the acquisition of knowledge and the communication of it. We find it easier to perceive the extraordinary merit of studies pursued, with a success which, though imperfect, was beyond the standard of his age, by a man whose frame was racked by almost ceaseless pain; a man, also, whom neither studious industry nor bodily torment disabled from toiling with unsurpassed energy as the governor, and legislator, and reformer of a nation; and a man who, while he so worked and so suffered, was never allowed to unbuckle the armour which he had put on in youth, to defend his father-land against hordes of savage enemies. "This," declared he, "is now especially to be said; that I have wished to live worthily while I lived, and after my life to leave, to the men that should be after me, my remembrance in good works." He, too, who thus acknowledged duty as the great law of being, had learned humbly whence it is, that all strength for the performance of duty must be received. He has set down the momentous lesson with a labouring quaintness of phrase: "When the good things of life are good, then are they good through the goodness of the good man that worketh good with them: and he is good through God!"

## CHAPTER III.

## THE NORMAN TIMES.

A. D. 1066—A. D. 1307.

William I.,.....	1066-1087.	Richard I.,.....	1189-1199.
William II.,.....	1087-1100.	John,.....	1199-1216.
Henry I.,.....	1100-1135.	Henry III.,.....	1216-1272.
Stephen,.....	1135-1154.	Edward I.,.....	1272-1307.
Henry II.,.....	1154-1189.		

## SECTION FIRST : LITERATURE IN THE LATIN TONGUE.

INTRODUCTION TO THE PERIOD. 1. Distribution of Races and Kingdoms.—  
 2. Literary Character of the Times.—THE REGULAR LATIN LITERATURE.  
 3. Learning in the Eleventh Century—Lanfranc—Anselm.—4. Philosophy and Physical Science in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries—Hales and Duns Scotus—Roger Bacon.—5. Historians—William of Malmesbury—Geoffrey of Monmouth—Girald du Barri—Matthew Paris.—6. Success in Poetry—Joseph of Exeter—Geoffrey de Vinsauf—Nigel Wireker's Ass.—THE IRREGULAR LATIN LITERATURE. 7. Latin Pasquinades—The Priest Goliath—Walter Mapes.—8. Collections of Tales in Latin—Gervase of Tilbury—The Seven Sages—The Gesta Romanorum—Nature of the Stories.—9. Uses of the Collections of Tales—Reading in Monasteries—Manuals for Preachers—Morals annexed in the Gesta—Specimens.—10. Use of the Latin Stories by the Poets—Chivalrous Romances taken from them—Chaucer and Gower—Shakspeare and Sir Walter Scott—Miscellaneous Instances.

## INTRODUCTION TO THE PERIOD.

1. AT this point we have to take account, for the last time, of events that affected the distribution of the nations inhabiting our country, and the languages spoken in the several regions.

The Norman Conquest introduced into England a foreign race of nobles and landholders, dispossessing certainly a large majority, and probably almost the whole body, of those who had been the ruling class in the preceding times. But the only new settlers were the kings, the barons with their military vassals, and the many churchmen who followed the Conqueror and his successors. The mass of the people continued to be Teutonic; and the mixture of the Saxons



with the Britons was now completed in all those provinces that were subject to the Norman kings. The Anglo-Saxon tongue, in the state of transition which it was undergoing throughout the period now in question, spread itself everywhere over those territories in the course of two or three centuries, Cornwall being perhaps the only exception. The Cymric tongue continued to be spoken in Wales, not only while the Welsh princes maintained their independence, but after they were subdued by Edward the First.

The boundaries of the kingdom of Scotland were now stretched southward, to the line which has marked them ever since. In the western district of the border, the two petty British states had already become dependent on their more powerful neighbours. For Cumbria had been incorporated into Anglo-Saxon England, and had passed under the sceptre of the Normans; while the kings of Scotland had acquired, on the south of the Clyde, territories which may be supposed to have mainly constituted the ancient principedom of Strathclyde. On the eastern border, again, a long series of wars took place between England and Scotland; but, in the end, Berwickshire and the Lothians were, for a time at least, held by the Scottish kings as fiefs under the English crown. Gradually an Anglo-Saxon dialect became universal throughout the Scottish Lowlands; the Highlands retaining their Celtic inhabitants and Gaelic speech.

For Ireland, invaded by the English in the year 1170, there opened a series of ages, in which the misery and disorganization of native feuds were succeeded by the evils of foreign oppression, evils yet more irritating, and more thoroughly preventive both of social and of intellectual advancement. The literary history of that beautiful and unfortunate country must be for us a dead blank, till, in modern times, we gladly discover many Irishmen among the most valuable citizens in the republic of letters.

2. In England, during this long period, literature flowed onward in its course, with a ceaseless, though somewhat eddying tide.

The generation which succeeded the Conquest gave birth, as we might have expected, to little that was very remarkable. The twelfth century, beginning with the reign of the accomplished Henry Beauclerc, and closing with that of the chivalrous Cœur-de-Lion, was distinguished, beyond all parts of our mediæval history, for the prosperity of classical scholarship; and the Norman-French poetry, studied with ardour, began to find English imitators.

The thirteenth century was a decisive epoch, not more for the constitutional history of England, than for its intellectual progress. The Great Charter was extorted from King John; the commercial



activity of the towns, and the representative functions of all the commons, were thoroughly grounded in the reign of his successor; and the ambition of Edward Longshanks, successful in crushing the independence of Wales, was equally so in Scotland, till the single-handed heroism of Wallace gave warning of the spirit which was to achieve deliverance on the field of Bannockburn. During this momentous array of public events, the English universities were founded or regularly organized; the stream of learning which had descended from preceding generations was turned into a new channel, giving birth to some of the greatest philosophers and scientific men of the Middle Ages; the romantic poetry of Northern France continued to flourish, and now began to be transfused into a language intelligible throughout England; and, above all, the Anglo-Saxon tongue passed, in the course of this century, through the last of those phases which transformed it into English.

This was also a time when religious sentiment was very keen. Three of the crusades had previously taken place; and the other four fell within the thirteenth century. They not only diffused knowledge, but kindled a flame of zeal: and the foundation and prosperity of the rival monastic orders of Dominicans and Franciscans, (the Black and Grey Friars of our history,) showed alike the devotion of the age, the growing suspicion that the church needed reform, and the dexterity of the Papal See in using zealots and malcontents for her own ends.

The Literature of those two centuries and a half will now engage our attention, that which was couched in Latin being first examined.

#### THE REGULAR LATIN LITERATURE.

3. In a generation or two after the Conquest, Classical and Theological learning, if profoundly acquired by few, was pursued by very many. There was no inconsiderable activity in the monasteries, as well as among the secular clergy; and, however apocryphal may be the alleged foundation of the older of the two English universities by Alfred, it is certain that, both at Oxford and Cambridge, by the beginning of the twelfth century, schools had been established, which were thenceforth permanent, and rapidly attained an academic organization. The continental universities, and the other ecclesiastical seminaries, both in France and elsewhere, were continually exchanging with England both pupils and teachers.

But the movement was, as yet, almost wholly among the Normans and their dependents: and the only great names which adorned the annals of erudition in England, in the latter half of the eleventh

century, were those of two Lombard priests, Lanfranc and Anselm. Both of them were brought by Duke William from his famous abbey of Bec; and, being raised in succession to the primacy, they not only prepared the means for diffusing among the ecclesiastics a respectable amount of classical learning, but themselves acquired and have retained high celebrity as theological writers. Lanfranc was chiefly famous for the dialectic dexterity with which he defended the Romish doctrine of the eucharist. Anselm, a singularly original and subtle thinker, is held by many to have been the true founder of the scholastic philosophy; and he is especially remarkable as having been the first to attempt moulding, into a scientific shape, that which has been called the argument *à priori* for the existence of the Supreme Being. It is hardly necessary to remark, that these speculations, and all other ecclesiastical and theological writings for several ages afterwards, were composed in Latin. The excuse of ignorance among the clergy, so artlessly assigned in the Anglo-Saxon times as a reason for writing in the living tongue, was no longer to be listened to: and the practice of freely publishing such knowledge to the laity was heretical in the eyes of those ecclesiastical chiefs, who now sat in the chairs of Aldhelm and Ælfric.

4. The abstract speculations of Lanfranc and Anselm were but slowly appreciated or emulated in England. Their effects, however, may be traced, to some extent, in the theological and other writings of the two most learned men whom the country possessed during the next century. John of Salisbury, befriended by Thomas à Becket, did himself honour by the fidelity which he maintained towards his patron; and he may be reckoned an opponent, not very formidable, of the scholastic philosophy. Peter of Blois, brought from France, became the king's secretary and an active statesman.

In the thirteenth century, when the teaching of Roscellinus and Abelard had made philosophy the favourite pursuit of all the most active-minded scholars throughout Europe, England possessed names which in this field stood higher than any others. Alexander de Hales, called "The Irrefragable Doctor," was a native of Gloucestershire; but he was educated and lived abroad. "The Subtle Doctor," Joannes Duns Scotus, was born either in  
 b. ab. 1265, }  
 d. 1308. } Northumberland or Berwickshire, received his education from the Franciscan friars at Oxford, taught and wrote with extraordinary reputation both there and at Paris and Cologne, and died in the prime of life. He was one of the most acute of thinkers, and founded a characteristic system of philosophical doctrine.

In the same age, while Scotland sent Michael Scot into Germany to prosecute physical science with a success which earned for him

the fame of a sorcerer, a similar course was followed at Oxford and Paris, and a similar character acquired through labours still more valuable, by Roger Bacon, a Franciscan friar. This great man's life of scientific experiment and abstruse reflection was embittered, not only by the fears and suspicions of the vulgar, but by the persecutions of his ecclesiastical superiors. His writings abound with curious conjectures, asserting the possibility of discoveries which have actually been made in modern times. In his supposed invention of gunpowder, we may perceive the foundation of the story which was told, how the fiend, to whom the heretical wizard had sold himself, carried away his victim in a whirlwind of fire.

5. The unsettled state of the languages spoken in England co-operated with the clerical tendencies, in causing the Latin to become the vehicle of almost all Historical writing.

Very few works of this class possessed, till much later, any literary merit: but very many of them, still extant, are valuable or curious as records of facts. A considerable number of Chronicles were kept in the monasteries, furnishing, from one quarter or another, a series which extends through the greater part of the Middle Ages. The individual Historians, all of them ecclesiastics, were very numerous. Among those who have claims to notice for skill in writing, William of Malmesbury, one of the earliest, (but virtually belonging to the twelfth century,) deserves honour as an industrious and candid investigator of early traditions. The history of Geoffrey of Monmouth is notorious for its unsifted mass of legendary fiction; but the poetical student cannot well be ungrateful to the preserver of the fable of Arthur, and of the stories, hardly better vouched, of Lear and Cymbeline. The vain and versatile Girald de Barri, best known by the name of Giraldus Cambrensis, has left elaborate historical and topographical works, notable for their national partialities, especially in Irish affairs, but very lively both in narrative and description. The principal work of Matthew Paris, a Benedictine monk of Saint Albans, shows close acquaintance with the events of his times, and is written with very great spirit. Its freedom of dealing with church questions made it a favourite authority with the early Reformers.

Of the many other historians and chroniclers, it may be enough to name, as perhaps possessing greater importance than the rest, Henry of Huntingdon, Gervase of Tilbury, Roger de Hoveden, and the recently discovered Jocelin de Brakelonde.

6. The classical knowledge of the times was tested more severely by composition in Latin Verse, which was practised actively by

some of those historical writers, as well as by many others : and the success is allowed to have been surprisingly great. Besides innumerable small pieces, there were several very ambitious attempts, the *a. aft.* } best of which were the two epics of Josephus Iscanus, that is,  
 1200. } Joseph of Exeter. His "Antiocheis," celebrating the third crusade, is almost entirely lost : his poem "On the Trojan War" has so much of classical purity, that, after the general revival of learning, it was several times printed as a work of Cornelius Nepos. Geoffrey de Vinsauf's didactic poem "On the New Poetry," is a treatise on composition, whose showy affectations, obtaining a popularity refused to his more correct contemporaries, have been blamed for some part of the false taste that soon prevailed. But the most amusing of all our early classical poems is a satire called "The Mirror of Fools," written by Nigel Wircker, a monk of Canterbury. The hero, Brunellus, is literally an ass, who, ambitious of distinction, studies in the university of Paris, and enters successively all the monastic orders. Dissatisfied both with the learned men and the monks, he sets about forming a new sect of his own : but, caught by his old master, he is compelled to resume his natural station, and close his life in carrying panniers.

In the thirteenth century the studies of philologers were extended to Greek and Hebrew, chiefly after the example had been set by Robert Grossetête or Grosthead, the universally accomplished Bishop of Lincoln.

#### THE IRREGULAR LATIN LITERATURE.

7. Before the time when Bacon and Michael Scot were said to have dealt with supernatural beings, the people of England had really begun to be possessed by a spirit which was destined soon to exert tremendous power, the spirit of resistance to tyranny and abuse, both ecclesiastical and secular. The Latin tongue became, somewhat oddly, one of the spells used for the evocation.

There had arisen, in the lowest times of classical taste, a fashion of ending Latin verses with rhymes. When the versification of some of the modern tongues had been partly formed, Latinists imitated it, not only rhyming their lines, but constructing them by accent, with a convenient disregard of quantity. Much devotional poetry was written after this model, and not a little of it in our own country. But the most curious specimens are a huge number of pieces, still preserved, in which verses so framed are made the medium of personal and public satire.

Such attacks on the clergy and the church began about the middle of the twelfth century, and can be traced far onward in the



next. The boldness of invective would be incredible, especially since churchmen were almost always the writers; were we not to remember the peculiar position of the church in England, and also several special circumstances in the history of the time. The most lively and biting of our satires of this class are connected by a whimsical thread. The hero is an imaginary priest called Golias, who is at once a personification of the worthless ecclesiastics, and the mouthpiece of the body in their remonstrances to their rulers; while he is occasionally made a bishop, when his elevation helps to give point to a sarcasm directed against the dignified clergy. From the humorously and coarsely candid "Confession of Golias" are extracted the verses which have so often been quoted as a drinking-  
*d. aft.* } song, and attributed to Walter Map or Mapes.\* For this  
 1196. } and other reasons, it is believed that the character of the hero may have been invented, and that in all likelihood many of the poems were written, by Mapes; a man of knowledge as well as wit and fancy, who might have been named as the author of a curious miscellany in Latin prose, and will come in our way immediately as a writer in another field. He was a favourite of Henry the Second, and promoted by him to the archdeaconry of Oxford, and to other benefices.

With the reign of John begins a new series of Latin pasquinades, levelled at the political questions of the day, and all embracing the popular side. The king and his successor are lashed unsparingly: the persons praised are De Montfort, and the other barons who opposed the crown. The Latin, however, although the appropriate organ of circulation among the clergy, was not so for any other audience. It continued to be used, but less and less: the Norman-French became more frequent, a fact which seemingly indicates a design of the writers to obtain a hearing among the nobles and their retainers; and, towards the end of our period, the English dialect of the day was almost the only medium of this satirical minstrelsy. About the close of the century, the ballad-makers employed themselves in fanning that patriotic hatred of Frenchmen, which the wars of Edward the First made it desirable for the descendants of the Normans to foster; and the Scots, for similar reasons, were libelled with equal good-will. One piece, a bitter complaint of oppression of the poor by the nobles and higher churchmen, purports to have been written by an outlaw in the greenwood, and thrown on the highway to be picked up by passengers.

8. The dignity of the Roman tongue was hardly infringed fur-

\* *Meum est propositum in taberna mori.*

ther by the jests of Goliath and his confederates, than it was by another use to which it was frequently put in the times under review, and by which the later poetry of Europe profited largely.

It became the means of preserving and transmitting an immense stock of Tales, which otherwise would inevitably have been lost, and which, from those days down to our own, have been the germs of the finest poetical inventions. Such stories found, on various pleas, ready admission into works of a very serious kind: and, in particular, the want of critical judgment with which history was written, gave room for the grave relation of many legends of the wildest character. One of our countrymen, already named, Gervase of Tilbury, in an historical work presented to his patron the Emperor of Germany about the beginning of the thirteenth century, inserted a special section "On the Marvels of the World." It abounds with the strangest fictions, which reappeared again and again for centuries: and one of its superstitious legends suggested to Sir Walter Scott the combat of Marmion with the spectre-knight. Other churchmen employed their leisure in collecting stories avowedly fictitious: and among these was an English Cistercian monk, Odo de Cerinton, who, a little earlier than Gervase, compiled a very curious mass of moral fables and other short narratives.

Many scattered inventions of the sort travelled from the East, in the course of that constant communication with Asia which was maintained in the age of the Crusades: and from that quarter came the earliest of those collections, in which the separate tales were linked together by one consecutive story. This was the Indian romance of Sindabad; which, through the Hebrew and Greek, passed into the Latin, and thence into every living tongue of Europe, appearing both in prose and verse, and being made to assume new names and manners in each of its new shapes. It is commonly known as "The Seven Sages," and underwent its last stage of decay in becoming one of our own common chap-books. In its most usual form, the outline which connects the parts together is this. The son of a Roman emperor is condemned to death by his father, on the instigation of an evil-minded step-mother: and, warned by a magician, he remains obstinately silent, though he had it in his power to exculpate himself completely. The seven wise men who were the imperial counsellors endeavour to move their lord to mercy, by telling him tale after tale to prove the danger of rash judgments: the empress strives to destroy the effect of each lesson, by a tale inculcating justice or promptitude:



and the prince's life is thus preserved, till, the appointed days of silence having elapsed, he makes his defence and exposes the calumny of his accuser. Several of the stories told are repeated in other collections of the sort, as well as in the later poetry of England and the continent.

A celebrity yet greater was attained, and a wider influence exerted on literature, by another series of fictions, not united by any one story, and known by a title for which, various as its matter is, hardly any part of it furnishes a reason. It is called the "*Gesta Romanorum*," or "*Deeds of the Romans*." Manufactured into different shapes in different countries, and not having the same contents in any two of them, it is everywhere a medley of the most dissimilar elements. There are fables in the manner of *Æsop*, and distorted fragments of Grecian learning, from *Argus* and *Mercury* to *Alexander of Macedon* and his tutor *Aristotle*. In the Roman history we begin with memorials of the *Æneid*, being told how *Pallas* the son of *Evander* was a giant, his skeleton, when disinterred, exceeding in length the height of the walls of Rome; the leap of *Curtius* into the gulf which yawned in the forum is said to have been performed by *Marcus Aurelius*; and the poet *Virgil* assumes the character, which he still retains by tradition in Italy, of a mighty but benevolent enchanter. The outlines of some thrilling tales of terror are furnished by the record of local superstitions, celebrating visitations of supernatural beings and the adventures of treasure-seekers who descend into caverns magically protected. And it is worth while to note that, in one of the most elaborate of these fictions, the original hero was the learned *Gerbert*, believed to have introduced algebra into Christendom; who, although he became the last pope of the tenth century, paid the old penalty of eminent knowledge by being regarded as a magician. One or two of the tales are monkish legends: some are short chivalrous romances: some are moral and religious apologues or parables. Others, pretty numerous, are familiar pictures of society, almost always satirical in cast, and levelling their wit most frequently at the female sex. In pieces of this last kind, the "*Gesta*" very often have a close resemblance, in character as well as incident, to those French poems which we shall immediately know by the name of *Fabliaux*.

It is alike uncertain when, where, and by whom the "*Gesta*" were first compiled. Probably they arose in Germany: but so many of the stories are taken from older sources, that, even if the collection did not find its way to England till the fourteenth century, there can have been few of them that were not already known.

9. The uses to which those Latin tales were applied in the middle ages were very various, and several of them not a little amusing. Some of the collectors may have had no further aim, than that of relieving the weariness of a monk's inactive life; and copies were multiplied in the convents, for the benefit of those brothers who were disinclined to weightier studies. It has been believed, also, that, in those readings aloud during meals, which were practised in most of the monastic communities, the light stories often took their turn with books of a more solid kind.

But the collections of fiction were used yet more publicly. They became the manuals of preachers, who had recourse to them for examples and illustrations suitable to the taste of rude and ignorant hearers. Several books of the sort were avowedly designed for being useful in this way: and one of these at least was written in England, bearing a title which may be translated, "The Text-book of Preachers." It was compiled in the latter part of the fourteenth century, by John Bromyard, a Dominican friar, himself noted as a pulpit orator, and as a strenuous opponent of Wycliffe.

The "Gesta" themselves, in all their shapes, are carefully adapted for this and other didactic purposes. For there is annexed to every tale a religious application or moral. These practical inferences are often absurdly inapplicable to the narrative, and could not well have been otherwise: often, also, they are dexterously devised for recommending superstitious practices or erroneous doctrines: and the freedom of dealing with sacred things and names makes many of them unfit to be recorded. An idea of the turn they usually take may be gathered from one little narrative, which probably was invented for the sake of the moral. A dying emperor puts into the hands of his son a golden apple, which, travelling through distant lands, he is to present to the greatest fool he can find. After many wanderings, the prince reaches a country whose government is regulated by a strange law: the king is appointed for one year only, at the end of which he is banished, and must die poor and miserable. The traveller asks whether any one has been found to fill the last vacancy: and, learning that the throne is occupied, he offers his apple to the king, as the most foolish man he has ever encountered. The leading doctrine to be inferred is very obvious. The unwise king is the sinful man, who lives for the fleeting enjoyments of this world, content to purchase them by lasting misery in the next. Laymen sometimes outdid the clergy themselves, in the ingenuity with which they moralised the favourite inventions. There is a picturesque story of a nobleman, who, falling into a deep pit, in which are a lion an ape and a serpent, is rescued by a wood-

cutter. Instead of rewarding his benefactor, he causes him to be cruelly beaten. The historian Matthew of Paris tells us, that this fable was frequently in the mouth of Richard Cœur-de-Lion; and that he applied it as representing the ingratitude to heaven shown by those princes of Christendom, who refused to assist in wresting the Holy Sepulchre from the infidels.

10. The re-appearances of those monastic fantasies in English poetry have been so frequent and so interesting, that we are tempted to anticipate a little for the purpose of making ourselves acquainted with some of them.

Both in the Latin, and in French translations, they became current in England, as elsewhere, before the close of the thirteenth century. Stories either identical with some of them, or very like, appear early among the Chivalrous Romances; a class of works whose history, both in their original French, and in the English translations and imitations, we shall immediately begin to study. Indeed it is not always certain whether the minstrels have borrowed from the monks, or the monks from the minstrels. Two of the most famous of the romances which still survive in our own language, are in substance the same with stories of the "Gesta." The one is "Guy of Warwick," which, in its simplest shape, is truly a devout legend, breathing a darkly ascetic spirit. The hero deserts his wife and child to do battle in the Holy Land: returning home, he thinks proper, instead of rejoining his family, to hide himself in a hermitage near his castle: and only on his deathbed does he allow himself to be recognised. The other romance is Robert of Sicily, which shrouds a fine moral under a fantastic disguise. The prince being puffed up with pride, an angel is sent to assume his figure and take his place; while he, changed so as not to be known, is insulted and neglected, and becomes thankful to be received as the jester of the court. After long penance has taught him humility, he is restored to dignity and happiness.

When we reach the poetry which adorned England in the latter half of the fourteenth century, we shall have to examine the works of its two chief masters so closely, that their obligations to the Latin books of amusement could not at present be specified without causing a risk of repetition. But we ought here to learn that Chaucer, the greatest of our old poets, owes to the "Gesta" two at least, if not more, of his tales; and that Gower, a man of much weaker invention, borrows from them with yet greater freedom.

The latter of these names, however, introduces us, with seeming abruptness, to the most celebrated name in our literature. The longest piece in the "Gesta" is the romance of "Apollonius," a

very popular fiction throughout the middle ages, and preserved even in an Anglo-Saxon version. It was the foundation of Gower's most elaborate poem : and this again furnished the plot of "Pericles, Prince of Tyre." The drama so called is usually printed among the works of Shakspeare, and not without good reason ; since it is, in all likelihood, either wholly a production of his early manhood, or one of those plays which, in that stage of his life, he concocted by altering and augmenting older dramas. Further, our immortal poet's "Merchant of Venice" is doubly indebted, if not to the Latin "Gesta," yet certainly to the English translation, or to some of the compilations which borrowed from its stores. For in it appeared, perhaps for the first time, the story which was the original of the caskets exhibited for choice by Portia to her lovers ; and there we find, also, the incident of the bond in which the forfeit was a pound of flesh, and the device by which the penalty was evaded.

The spectre-legend, too, which has been noticed as re-modelled in Marmion, is in the "Gesta ;" though it was taken from the older source by the Scottish poet. Not a few jests, likewise, which in their modern shape have received the credit of being new, really flow from this venerable source. It is enough to cite, as an instance, a story occurring in some of our school-books, that of "The Three Black Crows." Parnell's pleasing poem "The Hermit" has the same origin. Nor is it unworthy of remembrance, that one of the *Æsop*-fables of the old books suggested, directly or indirectly, the phrase of "Belling the Cat," used by the Earl of Angus in the rebellion against James the Third of Scotland. The mice hold a council, to deliberate how they may protect themselves from the cunning of the cat. They adopt unanimously a resolution proposed by one of the sages of the race ; that a bell shall be hung round the neck of their enemy, to warn them of his approach by its ringing. The scheme proves useless by reason of one trifling difficulty : no mouse is brave enough to undertake putting it in execution.



## CHAPTER IV.

## THE NORMAN TIMES.

A. D. 1066—A. D. 1307.

SECTION SECOND : LITERATURE IN THE NORMAN-FRENCH AND  
SAXON-ENGLISH TONGUES.

NORMAN-FRENCH. 1. The Two Languages of France—Poetry of the Normans—The Fabliaux and Chivalrous Romances.—2. Anglo-Norman Romances from English History—The Legend of Havelok—Growth of Fictitious Embellishments—Translations into English.—3. Anglo-Norman Romances of the Round Table—Outline of their Story.—4. Authors and Translators of Anglo-Norman Romances—Chiefly Englishmen—Borron—Gast—Mapes.—SAXON-ENGLISH. 5. Decay of the Anglo-Saxon Tongue—The Saxon Chronicle.—6. Extant Relics of Semi-Saxon English Verse—Historical Works partly from the French—Approach to the English Tongue—The Brut of Layamon—Robert of Gloucester—Robert Mannyng.—7. Other Metrical Relics of Semi-Saxon and Early English Verse—The Ormulum—The Owl and the Nightingale—Michael of Kildare—The Ancient English Drama.

## NORMAN-FRENCH LITERATURE.

1. WE must now learn something as to that vigorous and imaginative school of Poetry, which arose in the Norman-French tongue, and was the model of all the earliest poetical efforts in our own.

Before the close of the Dark Ages, there were formed in France, out of the decayed Latin, with some Teutonic additions from the Franks, two leading dialects. They were spoken in different quarters; and each of them became, early in the Middle Ages, the vehicle of a characteristic literature.

In Southern France was used the Provençal, or tongue of Provence, named also the Langue d'Oc, or tongue of Oc, from the word in it corresponding to our "yes." It was liker to the Italian and Spanish than to the modern French. Its poets called themselves Troubadours, that is, Inventors; just as our old English and Scottish poets were named Makers. Its poetry was chiefly lyrical, and became the favourite model of the early poets of Italy, affecting our own literature to some extent, but not very early or very materially.

The dialect of Northern France was known as the Langue d'Oil



or d'Oui. But we speak of it oftenest as Norman-French; because it was in Normandy that its cultivation was completed, and there also that important literary works were first composed in it. It became the standard tongue of France, and has continued to be so. Its poets had the name of Trouvères or Trouveurs. The greater part of its poetry was narrative; and most of the tales may be referred to the one or the other of two classes. There were the poems called *Fabliaux*, usually short stories, which had a familiar and comic tone, even when they dealt with the same kind of incidents as poems of the other class. There were, again, the Chivalrous Romances, compositions more bulky, and almost always more serious in temper as well as more ambitious in design.

The *Fabliaux* affected our literature little till the time of Chaucer. In regard to their character, we hardly require to know more than that which we may gather from remembering the likeness which, as we have learned, subsisted between them and the lighter stories in the monastic collections of Latin fiction. It should also be observed, however, that many poems, usually described as *Fabliaux*, rise decidedly into the serious and imaginative tone of the romances; and that some collections of narratives, in Norman-French verse, exhibit the same author as attempting both kinds of composition. Of this mixed kind are the works of a poetess, usually known as Marie of France, who probably wrote in Brittany, but made copious use of British materials, and addresses herself to a king, supposed to have been our Henry the Third. Her twelve "*Lays*," some of which have their scene laid in England, and celebrate the marvels of the Round Table, are among the most beautiful relics which the middle ages have left us. They were well known, and freely used, by Chaucer and others of our poets. Her "*Fables*" are interesting in another way. She acknowledges having translated them from the English tongue; and one of the manuscripts makes her assign the authorship of her originals to king Alfred.

The Romances of Chivalry we must learn to understand more exactly than the *Fabliaux*. They are the effusions of a rude minstrelsy, using an imperfect language, and guided by irregular impulse, not by laws of art; but many of them are, in parts at least, delightfully imaginative, spirited, or pathetic. The history of the whole class is important, not only for their value as illustrations of mediæval manners and customs, but also for their intimate connexion with our early literature;

Where, in the chronicle of wasted time,  
We see descriptions of the fairest wights,  
And beauty making beautiful old rhyme,  
In praise of ladies dead and lovely knights.

The earliest of them, except such as were really nothing more than devout legends, were founded on historical traditions of England; and tales engrafted on these were the best and most popular of the series. Native Englishmen, also, writing in French, were among the most active of those who worked up our national stories into the romantic shape; all the French works were composed for our English court and nobles; and translation of them was the most frequent use to which our infant-language was applied. Above all, they imprinted on our poetry, in its oldest stages, characteristics which it did not lose for centuries, if indeed it can be said to have lost them at all.

2. The oldest among them, like other early pieces of narrative poetry, are based on national events, and are not distinguishable, by any well-drawn line, from popular and legendary histories. Such is the character of an ancient French romance, which is particularly interesting to us, both on account of its story, and because it exists also in a very ancient English dress. It relates one of those traditions of the east of England, by which the Norse settlers strove to give dignity to their arrival in the island. This romance of "Havelok" was written, in French, early in the twelfth century. The poem is almost free from the anachronisms of manners and sentiment which soon became universal; and the cast of the story is simple and antique. Its hero, the orphan child of a Danish king, exposed at sea by the treachery of his guardian, is drifted on the coast of Lincolnshire, and fostered by the fisherman Grim, who afterwards gives his name to an English town. A princess of England, imprisoned by guardians as false as Havelok's, is forced by them to marry him, that she may thus be irretrievably degraded: he reveals his royal descent, already marked by a flame playing round his head; and, in fierce battles, he reconquers his wife's inheritance and his own.

The writers of the romances gradually departed, more and more, from the facts given to them by the chronicles and popular traditions. They substituted private exploits and perils for national events, with increasing frequency, till their incidents and their personages were equally the offspring of pure invention: they ceased to aim at true representation of the manners and institutions of antiquity, and minutely described the past from their observation of the present. Seizing on the most poetical features of society, as it appeared among the nobles in whose halls their songs were to be chanted, they wove out of these the gorgeously coloured web of chivalry, with its pictures of life eccentrically yet attractively unreal, and its anomalous code of morals, alternately severe and loose, generous and savage. They combined, into startling contrasts, both in the

scenery and in the adventures, the wild rudeness of ancient barbarism with the ambitious pomp of castles and palaces. They conjured up, around their knights and ladies, a shadowy world of monsters and marvels, to which the icy north contributed its dwarfs and giants, its earthdrakes and its talismanic weapons; while a vast array of fairies and magicians, of spells and prophecies, was gathered from superstitions floating about among the people, which were partly remembrances of heathenism altered by distance, partly corruptions of Christian belief natural to times of general ignorance, and partly oriental fables that had travelled from Spain and the Holy Land.

We have noticed the only extant romance, founded on English history, in which these transformations are not strikingly shown. The least extravagant peculiarities of chivalry are introduced freely in the "*Gest of King Horn*;" which relates a story very like in outline to that of *Havelok*, and is believed, by our best critics, to have had its origin in some genuine Saxon tradition. In "*Bevis of Hamptoun*," and "*Guy of Warwick*," the historical character is utterly lost; and the heroes and their adventures are specimens of the most fantastic knight-errantry. In no instance were liberties taken so boldly with matters of fact, as in the romance of "*Richard Cœur de Lion*," composed in French not many years after its hero's death. It gives him a fiend for his mother, distorts his war in Palestine and his captivity into the wildest farrago of impossible exploits and dangers, and exaggerates his fanciful and choleric disposition into the perfection of chivalrous Quixotism and martial ferocity.

3. Of all the French romances, incomparably the most interesting are those that celebrate the glory and the fall of King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table. No poems of the class deviate so widely from the track of the old legends: none prove so forcibly to the discriminating reader the hollowness of the chivalrous morality; and none display, so brilliantly or so often, pictures romantically beautiful and scenes of tragic pathos.

The series, when completed, embraced the history of several generations. Before it had reached this point, the heroes had become so numerous, and the adventures so complicated, that a mere abstract would fill many pages. The supernatural machinery, introduced more profusely than in any other of the tales, and breathing a singular tone of mystic awfulness, touched at many points ground too sacred to be trodden carelessly. Although, likewise, the leading outline of the story implies strikingly a recognition of moral responsibility and retribution, the terrible lesson of the catastrophe is often forgotten in the details; and revolting incidents,

interwoven inextricably into the tissue of the narrative, pollute all the principal pieces of the group. Minute description, therefore, of those singular monuments, is here impossible. But a little acquaintance with them is needed, for a just comprehension of many things in our early poetry; and, although the pieces in their earliest forms are difficult of access, the research of an eminent scholar has made it easy to know something in regard to them.

The order in which the principal parts of the series were composed, appears to have been the same with that of the events narrated.

First comes the Romance of "The Saint Graal," (the holy vessel or cup,) which is in truth a saintly legend rather than a chivalrous tale. It is chiefly occupied in relating the history of the most revered of all religious relics, which not only proved and typified the mystery of the mass, but worked by its mere presence the most striking miracles. Treasured up by Joseph of Arimathea, it was by him or his descendants carried into Britain; but, too sacred to be looked on by a sinful people, it vanished for ages from the eyes of men. Secondly, the "Merlin," deriving its name from the fiend-born prophet and magician, celebrates the birth and exploits of Arthur, and the gathering round him of the peerless Knights of the Round Table. The story is founded on Geoffrey of Monmouth, or his Welsh and Armorican authorities; but the chivalrous and supernatural features disguise almost completely the historic origin. Thirdly, in the "Lancelot," the national character of the incidents disappears, a new set of personages emerge, and the marvellous adornments are of a more modern cast. The hero, nurtured from childhood by the Lady of the Lake in her fairy-realm beneath the waters, grows up to be, not only the bravest champion of the Round Table, but the most admired for all the virtues of knighthood; and this, too, while he lives in foul and deadly sin, and wrongs with secret treachery Arthur, his lord and benefactor. From his guilt, imitated by many of the other knights, was to ensue the destruction of the whole band; and the warning is already given. The presence of the Holy Graal is intimated by shadowy apparitions and thrilling voices; and the full contemplation of the miraculous relic is announced as the crowning glory of chivalry. Fourthly, the "Quest of the Saint Graal" tells how the knights, full of short-lived repentance and religious awe, scatter themselves on solitary wanderings to seek for the beatific vision; how the sinners all return, unsuccessful and humbled; but how at length the adventure is achieved by the young and unknown Sir Galahad, pure as well as knightly, and how he, while the vision passes before him, prays that he may live no longer, and is im-



mediately taken away from a world of calamity and sin. Fifthly, the "Mort Artus," or Death of Arthur, winds up, with tragic and supernatural horrors, the wild tale into which the fall of the ancient Britons had thus been transformed. The noblest of the champions perish in feuds, in which revenge was sought for mutual wrongs: and, after the fatal battle of Camlan, the survivors retire to convents or hermitages, to mourn over their sins and the ruin of their race. Arthur himself, wounded and dying, is carried by the Fairy of the Lake to the enchanted Isle of Avalon, there to dream away the ages that must elapse before he shall return to earth and reign over the perfected world of chivalry. Sixthly, of several romances which, though written after these, went back in the tale to interpolate new incidents and characters, the first part of the "Tristan," or Tristrem, alone requires notice here. The adventures of its hero are a repetition, with added impurities and new poetical beauties, of those which had been attributed to Lancelot of the Lake.

4. The romances of this British cycle interest us through several circumstances, besides their national origin and their extraordinary power of poetic fascination.

The six that have just been described, which were the originals of all the others, were written, in the latter half of the twelfth century, for the English court and nobles, and some of them, it is said, on the suggestion of our King Henry the Second. Further, although they were composed in French, the authors of all of them were Englishmen. The Saint Graal is attributed to Robert Borron, the first part of the Tristan to Luke Gast of Salisbury; and all the rest are assigned to Walter Mapes, whom we know as the leader of the Latin satirists. The circumstances are curious; and they are equally so, whether these men were of Norman or of Saxon descent: indeed, the distinction of races, which must have chiefly disappeared among the higher classes long before, was probably, by that time, beginning to lose its importance for the mass of the people. It is to be noted, likewise, that all our six romances are couched in prose; a peculiarity which was hardly to have been looked for in early pieces of such a class, but which possibly may be supposed to have arisen from want of skill in French versification. Be this as it may, the twelfth century had not closed when Chrétien of Troyes constructed several metrical romances, chiefly from the prose of our English authors, but with a good deal of invention; and the stock was afterwards increased by other poets of France.

The Metrical Romances in the English tongue, which celebrate Arthur and his Round Table, are (probably with no exception that



is older than the fifteenth century) translations, or, at the utmost, imitations, of those French romances in verse. Such are two of the finest, "Sir Perceval of Galles," and "Ywayne and Gawayne;" and such also is the celebrated romance of "Sir Tristrem," which Sir Walter Scott claimed for the Scottish poet, Thomas of Ercildoune, on grounds which, now, are generally admitted to be unsatisfactory.

But hardly any of the English translations, belonging to this series, was made till the fourteenth century. The Tristrem, indeed, is the only one that was certainly translated earlier.

There are, however, several extant romances, which may be regarded, though not without much allowance for modernizing by transcribers, as specimens of the language of English verse during the last thirty years of the thirteenth century, or the first decade of the next. Such are "Havelok," "King Horn," and "Cœur de Lion," all from French originals lately referred to. Such is also the "King Alisaunder," one of the most spirited, but most audaciously inventive works of the kind. It devotes eight thousand lines to accoutring the Macedonian conqueror and his contemporaries in the garb of feudalism, and transforming his wars into chivalrous adventures. To these should perhaps be added two extant romances on themes quite imaginary, "Ipomydon," and "Florise and Blanche-fleur." All these, with very many others of the Old English Romances, may be found by curious readers in modern reprints.

## SAXON-ENGLISH LITERATURE.

5. Let us now turn back, to watch, somewhat closely, the vicissitudes which the Vernacular Literature had undergone since the Conquest interrupted its course.

The ancient tongue of England decayed and died away. But it decayed as the healthy seed decays in the ground; and it vegetated again as the seed begins to grow, when the suns and the rains of spring have touched it.

The clinging to the old language, with an endeavour to resist the changes it was suffering, is very observable in one memorial of the times, marked otherwise by a spirit strongly adverse to the foreigners. The Saxon Chronicle was still carried on, in more than one of the monasteries. The desponding annalists, while preserving many valuable facts and setting down many shrewd remarks, recorded eagerly, not only oppressions and violence, deaths and conflagrations, but omens which betokened evil to the aliens. They told how blood gushed out of the earth in Berkshire, near the native place of the immortal Alfred; and how, while King Henry the First was

at sea, not long before his death, the sun was darkened at mid-day, and became like a new moon; and how, around the abbey of Peterborough, (placed under a Norman Abbot, whom it was doubtless desirable to frighten,) horns were heard to blow in the dead of night, and black spectral huntsmen were seen to ride through the woods. It is curious, by the way, to observe, in this last story, an ingenious adaptation of the superstition of the Wild Hunt, which, in various shapes, was current for centuries throughout Germany. At length, when the Saxon language had fairly broken down with the last of the chroniclers, when French words intruded themselves in spite of him, and when, forgetting his native syntax, he wrote without grammar rather than adopt the detested innovations, the venerable record ceased abruptly, at the accession of Henry the Second.

6. Our remains of the English tongue, in its state of Transition, are chiefly or without exception written in verse : and the versification shows, as instructively as the diction, the struggle between opposing tendencies. Frequently, even in the romances and other translations, the Anglo-Saxon alliteration kept its ground against the French rhymes.

The most important group of these works throws us, once more, back on the Normans.

In the course of the twelfth century, two Frenchmen, both of them residing in England, wrote Metrical Chronicles of our country. About the middle of the century was composed the "History of the Angles," (*L'Estorie des Engles*), by Geoffrey Gaimar of Troyes, which comprehends the period from the landing of the West Saxons in the year 495, to the death of William the Red. It was not translated or otherwise used by later English writers ; but it is historically curious both for its matter and its sources. Its narrative, till near the close of the tenth century, is founded chiefly on the Saxon Chronicle, whose meaning, however, the foreigner has often misunderstood. The second chronicle, that of Richard Wace, a native of Jersey, was completed in the second year of Henry the Second's reign. It is called "The Brut of England," (*Le Brut d'Angleterre*), from Brutus, the fabulous founder of the British monarchy : and, following Geoffrey of Monmouth closely, it proceeds from the landing of the Trojans to the death of the Welsh prince Cadwalader in the year 689.

About the beginning of the thirteenth century, or the end of the preceding, Layamon, a priest, living in the north of Worcestershire, composed, in the mixed Saxon of the day, his "Brut" or English Chronicle. This work deserves especial notice, alike as one of the fullest specimens of our early tongue, and on account of its eminent

literary merit. It traverses the same ground as Wace's Chronicle, on which indeed it is founded in all its parts; borrowing only a little from Bede, and a good deal from traditional or other authorities of a fabulous kind. It is not a translation of Wace, but rather an amplified imitation. It has more than double the bulk: it adds many legends to his: and, throughout, but especially in the earlier parts, it dramatizes speeches and incidents, and introduces, often with excellent effect, original descriptions and thoughts. The versification is very peculiar. The old alliteration prevails; but there are many rhyming couplets, many which are both rhymed and alliterative, and others that are neither.

Since the recent publication of this venerable record, Layamon seems likely to be honoured as "The English Ennius." But this title had formerly been bestowed on Robert of Gloucester, a metrical chronicler then known better. His work was probably completed about the close of the thirteenth century, and certainly not three years earlier. Extending from Brutus to the death of Henry the Third, it follows Geoffrey of Monmouth so far as his work goes, adopting, as its chief authority afterwards, William of Malmesbury. It is in rhymed lines of fourteen syllables or seven accents, usually divisible into a couplet of the common measure of the psalms. Although it is much more than a mere translation, it shows exceedingly little of literary talent or skill.

There is still less of either in the last two of the metrical chronicles, in search of which, to complete the set, we may look forward into the fourteenth century. Soon after the death of Edward the First, a chronicle from Brutus to that date was written, in French verse, by Peter Langtoft, an ecclesiastic in Yorkshire, who follows Geoffrey till the close of the Anglo-Saxon times. A little before the middle of the century was compiled, in English, the chronicle of Robert Mannyng, called *De Brunne* from his birthplace in Lincolnshire. His book is entirely taken from two of the French authorities, used in succession, and each translated in the rhymed metre of the original. Thus he renders Wace into the romance-couplets of eight syllables or four accents, and Langtoft into Alexandrines.

7. Of English Metrical remains, besides the romances and chronicles, we have very few, and none of any importance, from the time between the Conquest and the middle of the twelfth century. It is to be observed, as a feature very important, that, on the revival of such compositions, after the latter of those dates, they imitated, from the beginning, the comparative simplicity and bareness of style that prevailed in the French pieces. The old Anglo-Saxon taste for obscure metaphor and pompous diction had entirely vanished.

The versification also shows, more decisively than that of the translations that have been noticed, the progress from the ancient alliterative metres to those rhymed measures which, at first copied from the French, soon supplanted all the older forms.

From the latter half of the twelfth century we have a composition which its author, a canon of some priory in the east of England, whimsically called the "Ormulum," from his own name Ormin or Orm. The design, executed only in part, was that of constructing a kind of metrical harmony of those passages from the Gospels, which are contained in the service of the mass. It has less of poetical merit than of ingenuity in reflection and allegory: but great praise has been bestowed on its purity of doctrine; and it is second only to Layamon as an instructive specimen of the Semi-Saxon stage of our tongue. Its measure is a line of fourteen syllables, or, more properly, of seven accents; which is usually or always divisible into two lines, making a couplet of our common psalm-metre. The verses are unrhymed, and very imperfectly alliterative.

Perhaps to the same time, and certainly to no later period than the close of Edward the First's reign, belongs the long fable of "The Owl and the Nightingale." This is one of the most pleasing of our early relics, easy in rhythm, and natural and lively in description. It is a contest for superiority of merit, carried on in dialogue between the two birds. The measure is that which is most common in the romances, and has been made familiar to us by Scott; consisting of rhymed couplets, in which each line has eight syllables or four accents. Alliterative syllables also occur frequently as incidental ornaments; a fashion very prevalent in our early poetry, even in pieces where rhymes chiefly prevailed. The poem has been attributed, on doubtful grounds, to an author otherwise unknown, called either Nicholas or John of Guildford.

To the thirteenth century belong several small pieces by Michael of Kildare, the first Irishman who is known to have written verses in English; and to him has been assigned, among others, the frequently quoted satirical poem, "The Land of Cockayne." Of anonymous poems, chiefly lyrical, composed towards the end of the century, many have been published; some of which, both amatory and religious, are promising symptoms of the poetical success which was to distinguish the succeeding age. Of the same date are not a few metrical legends of the saints; and Robert of Gloucester is said to have been the author of one large collection of these, the published specimens of which are, like his Chronicle, more curious than poetical.

It should be recorded, also, that the origin of the Old English

Drama may be said to have been almost contemporaneous with the formation of the Old English Language. The earliest extant pieces are assigned to the close of Henry the Third's reign. But it is enough to note the fact in the way of parenthesis. The dramatic efforts of our ancestors were, till the sixteenth century, so exceedingly rude, that we may delay learning any thing in regard to this branch of our literature till we have emerged from the Middle Ages. They were designed exclusively for being acted, with no view, and as little aptitude, to the ordeal of reading: their spectators were the least instructed class of the community: and the ecclesiastics, in whose hands, (especially those of the monks,) the management of them long continued, confined them to sacred and moral themes; and used them for communicating to the mass of the people such scraps of religious knowledge as it was thought right to impart.



## CHAPTER V.

## THE LITERATURE OF ENGLAND IN THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY.

A. D. 1307—A. D. 1399.

Edward II.,.....	1307-1327.
Edward III.,.....	1327-1377.
Richard II.,.....	1377-1399.

INTRODUCTION. 1. Social and Literary Character of the Period.—LITERATURE FROM 1307 TO 1350. 2. Occam's Philosophy—Ecclesiastics—English Poems.—PROSE FROM 1350 TO 1399. 3. Ecclesiastical Reforms—John Wycliffe—His Translation of the Bible—Mandeville—Trevisa—Chaucer.—POETRY FROM 1350 TO 1399. 4. Minor Poets—The Visions of Pierce Plowman—Character of their Inventions—Chivalrous Romances.—5. John Gower—His Works—Illustrations of the *Confessio Amantis*.—6. Geoffrey Chaucer—His Life—His Studies and Literary Character.—7. Chaucer's Metrical Translations and their Sources—His smaller Original Poems—The Flower and the Leaf.—8. Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*—Their Plan—The Prologue—Description of the Pilgrims.—9. The Stories told by the *Canterbury Pilgrims*—Their diversified Character, Poetical and Moral.

1. THE fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the afternoon and evening of the middle ages, are the picturesque period in English history.

In the contemporary chronicle of Froissart, the reign of Edward the Third shines like a long array of knightly pageants; and a loftier cast of imaginative adornment is imparted, by Shakespeare's historical dramas, to the troubled rule of the house of Lancaster, the savage wars of the Roses, and the crimes and fall of the short-lived dynasty of York. The characters and incidents of those stormy scenes, coloured so brilliantly in descriptions from which all of us derive, in one way or another, most of our current ideas in regard to them, wear, in their real outline, a striking air of irregular strength and greatness. But the admiring registrar of courtly pomps, and the philosophic poet of human nature, alike passed over in silence some of those circumstances of the times, that influenced most energetically the state of society and knowledge.

It is with the fourteenth century only, that we are in the meantime concerned.

The reign of Edward the Second was as inglorious in literature, as it was in the history of the nation. That of his son, covering half of the century, was not more remarkable for the victories of Crecy and Poitiers, than for the triumphs then achieved in poetry and abstract thinking. The Black Prince, our model of historic chivalry, and Occam, the last and greatest of our scholastic philosophers, lived in the same century with Chaucer, the father of English poetical literature, and Wycliffe, the herald of the Protestant Reformation. In the reign of Richard the Second, the insurrection of the peasants gave token of deep-seated evils for which the remedy was distant; while the more powerful classes, thinking themselves equally aggrieved, sought for redress through a change of dynasty, and thus prepared the way for several generations of conspiracy and bloodshed.

#### LITERATURE FROM 1307 TO 1350.

2. The earlier half of this century may conveniently be regarded, in all its literary relations, as a separate period from the later. The genius of the nation, which had already shown symptoms of weariness, seemed now to have fallen asleep.

England, it is true, became the birthplace of "The Invincible  
*b. ab. 1300.* } Doctor," William Occam. But this distinguished  
*d. 1347.* } thinker neither remained in his own country, nor imparted any strong impulse to his countrymen. Educated abroad, he lived chiefly in France, and died at Munich. While the writings of his master Duns Scotus were then the chief authorities of the metaphysical sect called Realists, Occam himself was the ablest, as well as one of the earliest, among the Nominalists. In regard to his position, it must here be enough to say, that the question to which these technical names refer, was considered by the schoolmen to be the great problem of philosophy, and was discussed with a vehemence for which we cannot sufficiently account, without knowing that the metaphysical speculations of the middle ages were always conducted with an immediate regard to their bearings on theology. Realism was held to be especially favourable to the distinctive doctrines which had then been developed in the Roman Catholic church. Nominalism, on the contrary, was discouraged not only as novel but as heretical; and Occam was persecuted for having been the first to enunciate clearly opinions which, in modern times, are held, in one shape or another, by almost all metaphysicians.

Meanwhile, the English ecclesiastics were not very eminent for speculative ability, and still less so for accuracy in classical knowledge. Three of the theological writers have some claim to notice in the history of philosophy. The Augustinian canon Robert Holcot was one of the few Nominalists of his day; while on the other side stood Archbishop Bradwardine, an able controversialist, and Walter Burleigh, a commentator on Aristotle. It is in a dearth of attempts at classical composition, that such names are cited as that of Richard Angarville or De Bury, bishop of Durham, author of a gossiping essay on books, (the *Philobiblon*,) and likely to be longer remembered for having been one of the earliest of our book-collectors.

Nor have we any distinguished names in the literature of the spoken tongue, which as yet had not taken the form of prose. Mannyng's *Chronicle* has already been noticed. Richard Rolle, usually called the hermit of Hampole, and Adam Davie of Stratford-le-bow, were writers of religious poems, which are not alleged by the most zealous antiquaries to possess any literary merit.

But the dawn of English literature was close at hand. The star which preceded its approach had already risen on the birth of Chaucer. He attained to early manhood in the close of the short period at which we have glanced; and the generation to which he belonged inherited a language that had become adequate to all literary uses. They were about to record in it high achievements of genius, as well as precious lessons of knowledge.

#### PROSE LITERATURE FROM 1350 TO 1399.

3. We pass to the latter half of the century, an era never to be forgotten either in the history of our intellectual or in that of our ecclesiastical progress.

The prevalence of metaphysical studies, in the thirteenth century, has been alleged as a main cause of that decay in accuracy of classical scholarship, which was already observable in England. From philosophical pursuits, in their turn, the attention of the clergy was now called away by matters more practical and exciting.

Learning had several munificent patrons, whose benefactions still survive. We must be satisfied with being able to note, in the course of the century, the foundation of several colleges at Oxford and Cambridge, with that of Winchester by the bishop and chancellor William of Wykeham.

Notwithstanding these and other tokens of prosperity, the state of the church was viewed with great dissatisfaction in many quarters.

The increase of the papal power led to claims which, affecting the emoluments of the ecclesiastics, were resisted by many of them, as well as by the parliament, now systematically organized. . Against abuses in discipline, indignant remonstrances arose, not only from the laity, but among the churchmen themselves; being prompted both by the pure zeal which animated some, and also by the rivalry which always prevailed between the secular priests and the monastic orders, especially the Mendicant Friars.

Foremost among those who called for reforms in the church, b. ab. 1324. }  
d. 1384. } stood the celebrated John Wycliffe, a native of York-shire. Becoming a priest, and attaining high fame for his knowledge and logical dexterity in dealing with philosophical and theological questions, he was placed at the head, first of one and then of another, of the colleges of Oxford. There, and afterwards from the country parsonages to which he was compelled to retreat, he thundered forth a series of denunciations, which gradually increased in boldness. At length, from exposing the ignorance and profligacy of the begging friars, and advocating the independence of the nation against the financial usurpations of the Roman see, he went so far as to attack the papal supremacy in all its relations, to deny several doctrines distinctively Romish, and to set forth in fragments doctrinal views of his own, which diligent students of his works have interpreted as making a near approach to Calvinism.

Although Wycliffe was repeatedly called to account for his opinions, he was never so much as imprisoned; and he retained his church-livings to the last. The papal hierarchy was then weakened by the Great Schism; and he was protected by the king's son, John of Gaunt, as well as by other powerful nobles. But, not long after his death, there burst on his disciples a storm of persecution, which crushed dissent till the sixteenth century; and his writings, both Latin and English, preserved by stealth only, had by that time become difficult of identification.

We are sure, at least, of owing to him, either wholly or in great part, the Version of the Holy Scriptures which bears his name, and which is still extant, and may now be read in print. There seems to be no reason for doubting, that this was the first time the Bible was completely rendered into the English tongue. The date of the composition appears to have been soon after the year 1380. The translation is from the Latin Vulgate, the received text of the Romish church. It has been remarked, with justice, that the language of Wycliffe's original compositions in English shows little advance, if any, beyond the point which had been reached in the early part of the century; but that his Bible, on which probably greater pains



were bestowed, is very far superior, though still ruder than several other compositions of the same date. Indeed, besides the reverence due to it as a monument in the religious history of our nation, it possesses high philological value, as standing all but first among the prose writings in our old tongue.

Our very oldest book in English prose, however, is the account given by Sir John Mandeville of his travels in the East, from which he had returned about the year 1355. It is an odd and amusing compound of facts correctly observed and minutely described, with marvellous stories gathered during the writer's thirty-three years of wandering. Soon afterwards, John De Trevisa, a canon residing in Gloucestershire, began a series of translations from the Latin, of which the most remarkable were the ancient law-treatise bearing the name of Glanville, and the *Polychronicon* recently written by Ralph Higden, which is a history of the world from the creation. But the prose writings of the time, which exhibit the language in the most favourable light, are decidedly those of the poet Chaucer. Besides translating Boethius, he has bequeathed to us in prose an imitation of that work, called "*The Testament of Love*," with two of his *Canterbury Tales*, and an astrological treatise.

#### POETICAL LITERATURE FROM 1350 TO 1399.

4. The principal writings of Chaucer belong to the last few years of the century; and, in examining hastily a few of the minor poems of his time, several of which appeared considerably earlier, we are preparing ourselves for understanding the better what our obligations to him have been.

Highest by far in point of genius, as well as most curious for its illustrations of manners and opinions, was the long and singular poem usually called "*The Visions of Piers Plowman*," written or completed in 1362, by a priest or monk named Robert Langland. The poet supposes himself, falling asleep on the Malvern Hills, to see a series of visions, which are descriptive, chiefly in an allegorical shape, of the vices of the times, especially those which prevailed among the ecclesiastics. The plan is confused; so much so, indeed, that it is not easy to discover, how the common title of the poem should be justified by the part assigned in it to the character of the Ploughman. But the poetical vigour of many of the passages is extraordinary, not only in the satirical vein which colours most of them, but in bursts of serious feeling and sketches of external nature. It has been compared with the *Pilgrim's Progress*; and the likeness lies much deeper than in the naming of such personages as Do-well,



Do-better, and Do-best, by which the parallel is most obviously suggested. Some of the allegories are whimsically ingenious, and are worth notice as specimens of a kind of inventions appearing everywhere in the poetry of the Middle Ages. The Lady Anima, who represents the Soul of Man, is placed by Kind, that is Nature, in a castle called Caro or the Flesh; and the charge of it is committed to the constable Sir In-wit, a wise knight, whose chief officers are his five sons, See-well, Say-well, Hear-well, Work-well, and Go-well. One of the other figures is Reason, who preaches in the church to the king and his knights, teaching that all the evils of the realm are because of sin; and among the Vices, who are converted by the sermon, we see Proud-heart, who vows to wear hair-cloth; Envy, lean, cowering, biting his lips, and wearing the sleeves of a friar's frock; and Covetousness, a bony, beetle-browed, blear-eyed, ill-clothed caitiff. Mercy and Truth are two fair maidens; and the Diseases, the foragers of Nature, are sent out from the planets by the command of Conscience, before whom Old Age bears a banner, while Death in his chariot rides after him. Conscience is besieged by Antichrist, who, with his standard-bearer Pride, is more kindly received by a fraternity of monks, ringing their convent-bells, and marching out in procession to greet their master. It may be noticed that, in the beginning of the poem, an ingenious use is made of the fable of the cat and the bell, which we discovered lately among the Latin stories of the monastic library.

The language of this curious old monument wears an air of antiquity beyond its age; which, however, may be attributable to the difficulties caused by the affectation of antiquity in the versification. It is in effect a revival of the alliterative system of metre, which still survived in some romances of the day, and was afterwards used in many imitations prompted by the popularity of Langland. The best of these, "Piers Plowman's Creed," a piece in every way inferior to the original, was written towards the close of the century, and is avowedly the effusion of a Wycliffite.

The very many Chivalrous Romances which were now added to the English tongue, deserve a passing notice, not only for the merit really possessed by not a few of them, but also on account of the good-humoured jests levelled at them by Chaucer, himself in no small degree affected both by their spirit and their diction. There is less reason for dwelling on the poems, not devoid of spirit, in which Laurence Minot celebrated the French wars of Edward the Third, and found means, in treating of his patron's successes in Scotland, to suggest consolations for the bloody field lost there by his father.

5. One of the best of our minor poets, and very interesting for

many relations to our more recent literature, was John Gower, the *a. ab.* } "ancient Gower" of Shakspeare, with whom Chaucer, his  
1408. } contemporary and friend, did not disdain to exchange borrowings. It is worth noting that Gower, a man of much knowledge, wrote in three languages; though he is remembered, not for his French or Latin verses, but for his "*Confessio Amantis*," or "*Lover's Confession*," a huge English poem in the octosyllabic romance-metre. It is a miscellaneous collection of physical, metaphysical, and ethical reflections, and of stories culled from the common repertoires of the middle ages. All these are bound together by a fantastic thread, in which a lover makes his shrift to a priest of Venus, named Genius, and receives advice and consolation from his anomalous confessor. The faults are general tediousness, and a strong tendency to feebleness: but the language is smooth and easy; and there is not a little that is exceedingly agreeable in description.

Of Gower's manner in his didactic strain, a specimen is furnished in the First Book, in a passage where the theme of the dialogue is, the moral danger arising from the two principal senses, seeing and hearing. The duty which is thus imposed on us, is illustrated by a piece of fabulous science, evidently derived from a misunderstood scriptural saying. There is (so Genius instructs his pupil) a serpent named *Aspidis*, who bears in his head the precious stone called the carbuncle, which enchanterers strive to win from him by lulling him asleep through magic songs. The wise reptile, as soon as the charmer approaches, lays himself down with one ear pressed flat on the ground; while he covers the other with his tail. So ought we obstinately to refuse admission to all evil impressions presented through the bodily organs. Perhaps there is not here any such depth of thinking, as should entitle us to expect much edification from the Seventh Book, which is wholly a treatise on Philosophy, as it was learned by Alexander the Great from the philosophers and astrol-ogers who were his tutors. Yet a good principle is involved in that mediæval classification which the poem lays down, dividing philosophy into three branches, the theoretical, the practical, and the rhetorical.

Of the narratives of the "*Confessio*" we may gain a fair notion, by glancing at some of those which it takes from the "*Gesta Romanorum*." The longest and best-told of them is the "*Apollonius of Tyre*," which has already been noticed, and may be understood from Shakspeare. The dramatist's tale of the Caskets is here, though in a less poetical dress. We have also an account of the female disguise put on by Achilles to evade the Trojan war. The tale of

Florent is very like that which Chaucer assigns to the Wife of Bath. The "Trumpet of Death" deserves notice for its striking tone of reflection. The outline is this. It was a law in Hungary, that, when a man was adjudged to die, the sentence should be announced to him by the blast of a brazen trumpet before his house. At a magnificent court-festival, the king was plunged in deep melancholy; and his brother asked the reason. No answer was returned; but, at daybreak next morning, the fatal trumpet sounded at the brother's gate. The condemned man came to the palace weeping and despairing. Then the king said solemnly; that, if such grief was caused by the expectation of the death of the body, much more profound sorrow could not but be awakened by the thought which had afflicted him as he sat among his guests; the thought of that eternal death of the soul, which Heaven has ordained as the just punishment of sin.

6. The few facts which we know positively in regard to Geoffrey  
*b. ab. 1328.* } Chaucer, throw very little light on his early history;  
*d. 1400.* } and, in regard to his writings, they enable us to see  
 only, that these were but part of the occupation of a long life fruitful in activity and vicissitude. He was born in London, and probably educated for the law: and, being thrown at an early age into public employment, he attained to confidential intimacy with men of high rank, in whose good and bad fortune he was equally a sharer. His chief patron was John of Gaunt; who, in his declining years, contracted a marriage, no way creditable, with the sister of the poet's wife. In his thirty-first year, Chaucer served in the French war, and was taken prisoner; and afterwards he received and lost several public offices and pensions, and was repeatedly employed in embassies both to France and Italy. There are symptoms of his having, in his old age, suffered poverty and neglect; and he scarcely survived to profit by the accession of Henry the Fourth, the son of his old patron.

The indignant freedom with which Chaucer exposes ecclesiastical abuses, was, as we have seen, common and long-rooted among literary men. Accordingly it does not require to be accounted for, by his dependence on the aristocratic party who advocated reforms in the church; nor is there, in the whole series of his works, anything entitling us to rank him among those who decidedly abandoned the distinctive doctrines of Romanism. John of Gaunt himself shrunk back from Wycliffe, when he ventured on his boldest steps; and Chaucer did not show, more than Langland, any leaning to the theological opinions of the reformer. His busy and adventurous life, however, prepares us for that practical shrewd-

ness, which is one of the most marked features in his writings: and his foreign travels, while they were not needed to make him familiar with French literature, gave him opportunities for acquiring an acquaintance with the language and poetry of Italy, of which his works exhibit, in the face of all doubts that have been started, clear and numerous proofs.

7. The frequency of translations and imitations is a striking characteristic in the poetry of the middle ages. The grave reference, which the poets so frequently make, to books as their authorities for facts, was much more than a rhetorical flourish. A very large proportion of Chaucer's writings consists of free versions from the Latin and French, and perhaps also from the Italian; and in some of these he has incorporated so much that is his own, as to make them the most valuable and celebrated of his works. The originals which he chose were not the Chivalrous Romances, but the comic *Fabliaux*, (already very common in Latin as well as in living tongues,) and also an allegorical kind of poetry which the *Trouvères* now cultivated ardently, deriving its character in great part from the *Troubadours*. The Italian literature furnished him with models of a higher class, which, however, he put much more sparingly to use. Its poets, taking their first lessons from Provence, had recently founded a school of their own, equally great for invention and for skill in art. But the awful vision of Dante furnished to Chaucer nothing beyond a few allusions and descriptions; and he was too wise and sober-minded to be carried away by the lyrical abstractions of Petrarch, if he really knew much of them. He seems to have derived from *fabliaux*, or other French or Latin sources, those stories of his which are to be found among the prose novels of Boccaccio; whose metrical works, however, we cannot doubt that he studied and imitated.

Three of the largest of Chaucer's minor works are thus borrowed: the allegorical "*Romance of the Rose*," translated, with abridgment, from one of the most popular French poems of the preceding century; the *Troilus and Cressida*, avowedly a translation, but a very free one, if its original really was the *Filostrato* of Boccaccio; and *The Legend of Good Women*, a series of narratives, founded on Ovid's *Epistles*. The *Troilus*, certainly among his earliest poems, is one of his best, notwithstanding the disgusting tenor of the story. The same theme, it will be remembered, is handled by Shakspeare, in a drama adorned by some of his most brilliant flowers of imagination, and inspired throughout with deep though despondent reflection. The choice of such a subject by the later of these two great poets is less to be wondered at than its adoption by the other, who



lived in a time that was much ruder, in sentiments as well as in manners.

Of the minor poems which appear to be entirely Chaucer's own, several, such as those which celebrate, in imaginative disguise, passages in the history of his royal patron, are, like most of the translations, chiefly interesting as proofs of the great mastery he had acquired over an imperfectly cultivated language. Nor, it must be said, would his fame be injured by the loss of any of them, except the fine allegorical inventions of *The House of Fame*, and *The Flower and the Leaf*; the former of which has received great injustice in its showy modernization by Pope, while the other also has suffered in the hands of Dryden. The structure of the latter of the two may serve to illustrate a kind of poetry, of which the *Romance of the Rose* was the most celebrated example, but which, throughout the later part of the middle ages, was equally popular among the poets and among their readers. The piece could not well be described more aptly, than in the prose sentences, very slightly altered, which the author prefixed to it as an explanatory argument or analysis. "A gentlewoman, out of an arbour in a grove, seeth a great company of knights and ladies in a dance upon the green grass: the which being ended, they all kneel down and do honour to the Daisy, some to the Flower, and some to the Leaf. Afterward this gentlewoman learneth by one of these ladies the meaning of the vision, which is this. They which honour the Flower, a thing fading with every blast, are such as look after beauty and worldly pleasure. But they that honour the Leaf, which abideth with the root notwithstanding the frosts and winter-storms, are they which follow virtue and enduring qualities, without regard of worldly respects."

8. The poetical immortality of Chaucer rests on his *Canterbury Tales*, which are a series of independent stories, linked together by an ingenious device.

A party of about thirty persons, the poet being one, are bound on a pilgrimage from London, to the tomb of Thomas à Becket at Canterbury. They meet at the inn of the Tabard, in Southwark, the host of which joins the cavalcade, and assumes the post of director. Each person is to tell two tales, the one in going, the other in returning: but we are allowed only to accompany the travellers on a part of the journey to Canterbury, and to hear twenty-four of their stories. The work is thus no more than a fragment; although its metrical part extends to more than seventeen thousand lines, being thus longer than the *Iliad*, and not far from twice as long as the *Paradise Lost*. It contains allusions bringing us down to a date considerably beyond the poet's sixtieth year: but



we can hardly suppose the whole to have been a fruit of old age. It is more probable that a good many of the tales had been written separately, long before; while others may have been added when the design of forming the collection was taken up, to be left uncompleted amidst the misfortunes which darkened the author's declining years.

The Prologue, which relates the occasion of the assemblage, and describes the company, is in itself a poem of no small bulk, and of admirable merit. Here no allowance has to be made for obligations to preceding inventors; and a strength is manifest, which incomparably exceeds any that was put forth when the poet had foreign aid to lean on. He draws up the curtain from a scene of life and manners, such as the whole compass of our subsequent literature has not surpassed; a picture whose figures have been studied with the truest observation, and are outlined with the firmest, and yet most delicate pencil. The tone of sentiment, never rising into rapture or passion, is always unaffectedly cheerful and manly; while it frequently deviates, on the one hand, into the keenest and most lively turns of humour, and, on the other, into intervals of touching seriousness; and, over the whole, the imagination of high genius has thrown the indescribable charm, which at once animates external nature with the spirit of human feeling, and brightens our dim thoughts of our own mental being with a light like that which illuminates the corporeal world around us.

A mere catalogue of the Pilgrims, who are thus vigorously described, would be an inventory of the English society of the day, in all ranks, except the very highest and the very lowest. There is a Knight, with his son, a young Squire. These two represent the chivalry of the times; and they are described, especially the latter, in the poet's best strain of gayly romantic fancy. They are attended by a Yeoman, a master of forest-craft. After them in rank comes a Franklin or country-gentleman, who is a justice and has often been knight of the shire. The peasantry are represented by three men; a Ploughman, described briefly and kindly; a Miller, whose portrait is a wonderfully animated piece of rough satirical humour; and a Reeve or bailiff, whose likeness is an excellent specimen of quiet sarcasm, relieved by fine touches of rural scenery. There is a whole swarm of ecclesiastical persons, at whose expense the poet indulges his love of shrewd humour without any check. The Prioress of a convent, affected, mincing, and sentimental, is attended by a Nun and three Priests: the Benedictine Monk is already known familiarly to most of us, being the original of the self-indulgent Abbot of Jorvaulx in *Ivanhoe*: in contrast to him stands the coarse and popular Beg-

ging-Friar, "a wanton and a merry:" and a Sompnour or officer of the church courts is yoked with a Pardoner or seller of indulgences. Last among the members or retainers of the church, is to be named a poor Secular Priest from a country village, who is described with warmly affectionate respect. The learning of the times has three representatives: the Clerk of Oxford is a gentle student, silent, thoughtful, and unworldly; the Sergeant-of-law is sententious, alert, and affectedly immersed in important business; and the Doctor of Physic is fond of money, skilful in practice, and versed in all sciences except theology. The trading and manufacturing sections of the community furnish several figures to the picture. Their aristocracy contains the Merchant, and the Wife of Bath, described with a keenness so inimitable: a meaner group is composed of the Haberdasher, Carpenter, Weaver, Dyer, and Tapestry-maker, with the Cook whom these have providently brought to attend them; and this part of the company is completed by a Shipman or mariner, and a Manciple or purveyor of one of the inns of court. These, with the Poet and the Host of the Tabard, are the world-renowned Pilgrims of Canterbury.

9. In some of the tales which follow, the tone rises from the familiar reality of the Prologue to the highest flight of heroic, reflective, and even religious poetry: in others, it sinks not only into the coarseness of expression which deformed so much of our early literature, but into a positive licentiousness of thought and sentiment. Most of the humorous stories, and more than one of the scenes by which they are knit together, are quite unrepresentable to young readers.

The series opens with the Knight's Tale of Palamon and Arcite, which, founded on an Italian poem of Boccaccio, has been modernized by Dryden, and made the groundwork of a striking drama sometimes attributed to Shakspeare. It is worthy of the delighted admiration with which poetical minds have always regarded it. It is the noblest of all chivalrous romances. Or, rather, it stands alone in our language, as a model of that which the romances might have been, but are not; symmetrical and harmonious, while they are undigested and harsh; full of clearness and brilliancy and suggestiveness, in its portraiture of adventures and characters which to the minstrels would have prompted only vague and indistinct sketches. This, a metamorphosed legend of Thebes and Athens, borrowing its first hints from the Latin poet Statius, is an instructive example of the manner in which the classical fables and history were disguised, in romantic trappings, by the poets of the middle ages. We shall learn something more in regard to it,

when we come to this point in reviewing the progress of the English Language.

The Squire's Tale, a tantalizing fragment, traverses another walk of romance, ushering us into a world of oriental marvels, some of which are identical with those of the Arabian Nights. Milton, whose fancy was keenly impressed by its picturesqueness, chooses it as his example of Chaucer's poetry; and he works up its figures into one of his most exquisite compositions of lyrical imagery. He wishes that it were possible, for the solace of his studious leisure.

" To call up him that left half-told  
The story of Cambuscan bold,  
Of Camball, and of Algarsife,  
And who had Canace to wife,  
That own'd the virtuous ring and glass;  
And of the wondrous horse of brass,  
On which the Tartar king did ride:  
—And if aught else great bards beside  
In sage and solemn tunes have sung,  
Of tourneys and of trophies hung,  
Of forests, and enchantments drear,  
Where more is meant than meets the ear."

The tale told by the Wife of Bath is a comic romance, the scene of which is laid at the court of King Arthur, and adorned with fairy transformations. The hero is required, on pain of death, to answer correctly a question proposed by the queen, what it is that women most desire; and he is taught by his wife to say, that they desire most of all to rule their husbands. Here the chivalrous recollections of the Round Table are used only as the occasion of one of those satires on the female sex, which abound so much in the Gesta, (the original of the story,) and in all the lighter compositions of the monks. Accordingly, it may not unfairly be regarded as the poet's protest against the popular tastes for the wilder of the romantic fictions. The same spirit becomes yet more decided in the rhyme of Sir Topas, the story which he supposes to be his own contribution to the common stock. It is a spirited parody on the romances, expressed chiefly in their own forms of speech; and the humour is heightened by the indignation with which the host, intolerant of attacks on the literature he best understood, arbitrarily puts a stop to its recitation. It tells us how the hero, a knight fair and gentle, fell in love with the queen of Fairyland; and how he rode through many a wild forest, ready to fight with giants if he should meet with any. The rude interruption prevents us, unluckily, from learning whether he was fortunate enough to find an opportunity of proving his valour.

The learned and gentle Clerk relates the story of Griselda, which

used to be made known to all of us in our nursery-libraries, and whose harshness is concealed, in the poem, by a singular sweetness of description, and touches of the tenderest feeling. It is one of the poet's master-pieces, and owes exceedingly little either to Petrarch, who is referred to as the authority, or to Boccaccio, whose prose narrative has by some been supposed to have really been the original.

We are raised almost into the sphere of religious poetry in the *Man of Law's Tale*, the history of Constance, which relates adventures used again and again in the romances, but found by all of them in the *Gesta*. The heroine, a daughter of the Emperor of Rome, becomes the wife of Ella, the Saxon king of Northumberland, and converts him and his subjects to the Christian faith. Twice exposed by malicious enemies in a boat which drifts through stormy seas, and accompanied in one of those perilous voyages by her infant child, she is twice providentially preserved; and on another occasion, when she is about to be executed on a false charge of murder, an invisible hand smites the accuser dead, and a voice from the sky proclaims her innocence. The legend of Saint Cecilia, told by one of the Nuns, is purely a devotional composition: and of the same cast, with much greater poetical beauty, is the short story related by the Prioress, of the pious child slain by the Jews, the pathos of which makes us forget that the poet, in telling it, was fostering one of the worst prejudices of his age.

The two Prose Tales, which stand so oddly among the metrical ones, are in several respects curious. The *Story of Melibeus*, which the Poet represents himself as substituting for his unpopular rhymes, suspends, on a feeble thread of narrative, a mass of ethical reflections, recommending the duty of forgiving injuries. That which is called the *Tale of the Parson or Priest*, the piece with which the collection abruptly ends, is in fact a sermon, and a very long one, inculcating the obligation, and explaining with minute subdivisions the laws and effects, of the Romish sacrament of penance.



## CHAPTER VI.

THE LITERATURE OF ENGLAND IN THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY,  
AND OF SCOTLAND IN THE FOURTEENTH AND FIFTEENTH.

A. D. 1399—A. D. 1509 ; AND A. D. 1306—A. D. 1513.

ENGLAND.	SCOTLAND.
Henry IV., .....1399-1413.	Robert the Bruce,.....1306-1329.
Henry V., .....1413-1422.	David II.,.....1329-1370.
Henry VI., .....1422-1461.	Robert II.,.....1370-1390.
Edward IV., .....1461-1483.	Robert III., .....1390-1406.
Edward V., .....1483.	James I., .....1406-1437.
Richard III., .....1483-1485.	James II., .....1437-1460.
Henry VII., .....1485-1509.	James III., .....1460-1488.
	James IV., .....1488-1513.

ENGLAND. 1. Poetry—John Lydgate—His *Storie of Thebes*.—2. Lydgate's *Minor Poems*—Character of his *Opinions and Feelings*—Relapse into *Monasticism*—Specimens.—3. Stephen Hawes—Analysis of his *Pastime of Pleasure*.—4. The Latest *Metrical Romances*—The Earliest *Ballads*—*Chevy Chase*—*Robin Hood*.—5. Prose—Literary Dearth—Patrons of Learning—Hardyng—William Caxton—His *Printing-Press* and its Fruits.—SCOTLAND. 6. Retrospect—Michael Scot—Thomas the Rhymer.—7. The Fourteenth Century—John of Fordun—Wyntoun's *Chronicle*—The Bruce of John Barbour—Its *Literary Merit*—Its *Language*.—8. The Fifteenth Century—The King's Quair—Blind Harry the Minstrel—Brilliancy of Scottish Poetry late in the Century—Henryson—His *Testament of Cressida*—Gawain Douglas—His *Works*.—9. William Dunbar—His *Genius and Poetical Works*—Scottish Prose still wanting—Universities founded—Printing in Edinburgh.

## THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY IN ENGLAND.

1. THE miseries which afflicted England during the greater part of the fifteenth century, thinly veiled in Shakspeare's heroic pictures, darken frightfully the true annals of the country. The unjust and unwise wars with France, made illustrious for the last time by Henry the Fifth, had their issue under his feeble son in national disgrace. Fresh revolts of the populace were followed by furious wars between the partisans of the two royal houses, till the rival claims were united in the family of Tudor. The unnatural contest,



desolating the land as it had not been desolated since the Norman invasion, blighted and dwarfed all intellectual growth. For more than a hundred years after Chaucer's death, our literary records do not set down any name the loss of which would at all diminish their lustre, unless Dan John of Bury may deserve to be excepted.

In short, this age, usually marked in Continental history as the epoch of the Revival of Classical Learning, was not with us a time either of erudition or of original invention.

The fifteenth century has transmitted to us a large number of Poetical Compositions; but most of them are quite valueless, unless as instructive specimens of the rapidity with which the language was undergoing the latest of the changes, that developed it into Modern English. Although, likewise, we know the names of many of the authors, two of these only call for notice.

*a. bef.* } John Lydgate, a Benedictine monk of Bury Saint Ed-  
*1461.* } munds, beginning to write before Chaucer's death, appears to have laboured for more than half a century, producing an immense number of compositions, many of which were of a temporary kind. His most ambitious works were three. The Fall of Princes is versified from the Latin prose of Boccaccio; the *Storie of Thebes* is an additional Canterbury Tale, borrowing a great deal from Statius and other classical sources, but investing the unhappy sons of *Œdipus* in chivalrous drapery, not without much spirit and picturesqueness; and, in the *Troy Book*, the fall of *Ilium* is similarly dealt with, and adorned with many striking descriptions.

Some features in the *Storie of Thebes* are thus described by the earliest historian of our old poetry.

"This poem is the *Thebaid* of a Troubadour. The old classical Tale of *Thebes* is here clothed with feudal manners, enlarged with new fictions of the Gothic species, and furnished with the descriptions, circumstances, and machineries, appropriated to a romance of chivalry. The Sphinx is a terrible dragon, placed by a necromancer to guard a mountain, and to murder all travellers passing by. Tydeus, being wounded, sees a castle on a rock, whose high towers and crested pinnacles of polished stone glitter by the light of the moon: he gains admittance, is laid in a sumptuous bed of cloth of gold, and healed of his wounds by a king's daughter. Tydeus and Polymite tilt at midnight for a lodging, before the gate of the palace of King Adrastus; who is awakened by the din of the strokes of their weapons, and descends into the court with a long train by torch-light. He orders the two combatants to be disarmed, and clothed in rich mantles studded with pearls; and they are conducted to repose, by many a stair, to a stately tower, after being served with

a refection of hippocras from golden goblets. The next day they are both espoused to the king's two daughters, and entertained with tournaments, feasting, revels, and masques. Afterwards, Tydeus, having a message to deliver to Eteocles, king of Thebes, enters the hall of the royal palace, completely armed and on horseback, in the midst of a magnificent festival. This palace, like a Norman fortress or feudal castle, is guarded with barbicans, portcullises, chains, and fosses. Adrastus wishes to close his old age in the repose of rural diversions, of hawking and hunting."\*

2. Lydgate is justly charged with diffuseness. He accumulates, to wearisomeness, both thoughts and words. But he has an earnestness which often rises into enthusiasm, and which gives a very impressive air to the religious pieces that make up a majority of his minor poems. Although his originality of invention is small, he sometimes works up borrowed ideas into exceedingly striking combinations. His descriptions of scenery are often excellent.

Some of his smaller compositions illustrate, very instructively, both the literary and the theological character of his time. The survey which we have now nearly completed of the literature of the middle ages, has furnished frequent examples of a fact learned by us in the commencement of our present studies; namely, that almost all the literary productions of those times fall into groups, each of them designed and fitted only for a limited audience. Neither comprehensive observation of society at large, nor a wish to instruct or please a wide and diversified circle of readers, has shown itself in any of the periods we have examined, till we reached the time of Chaucer. He, indeed, was truly a national poet; the shrewd observer of all facts which were poetically available, the active and enlightened teacher of all classes of men who were susceptible of literary instruction. In passing from his works to those of Lydgate, we feel as if we were turning aside from the open highway into the dark and echoing cloisters. The monk of Bury is thoroughly the monk: he is guided by the monastic spirit, and has the monastic blindness to every thing that happens beyond the convent gate. He, an ecclesiastic living in the generation after Wycliffe, is as strongly imbued with superstitious belief and priestly prejudice, as if he had just returned from the crusades, or had sat at the feet of Saint Dominic. If he was Chaucer's pupil in manner and style, his masters in opinion and sentiment were the compilers of the "*Gesta Romanorum*."

By marking carefully, and familiarizing to ourselves by one or

\* Warton: *History of English Poetry*.

two examples, some of the characteristics of Lydgate, the best and most popular of our English poets in the fifteenth century, we shall be prepared to hail with more lively satisfaction those great revolutions which, some generations afterwards, impressed a new and purer stamp alike on the literature and on the religion of the nation.

Dan John, like his fellow-monks of earlier times, is fond of satire, and sometimes not unsuccessful in it. In his "London Lickpenny" he scourges all persons engaged in active business, particularly the lawyers, a class of men towards whom the clergy entertained a heavy grudge, for having gradually wrested from them their old monopoly of public employment. In other pieces he repeats, with great zest, the threadbare jokes on the vices and frailties of the female sex. Several hymns and other devotional pieces are very fine, both in feeling and in diction. A few stories, borrowed from the Latin collections, the French fabliaux, and unknown authorities, are used for inculcating precepts moral and religious, and for enforcing the duties of the laity to the Church. One of the apologues we shall use in part, by and by, as a specimen of the English written in his day. Some of the others are instances of the superstitious tendency lately alluded to; while they are told with a solemn awfulness of tone, which, notwithstanding the frequent intrusion of fantastic levity, gives them no small poetical merit.

One of these recommends the duty of praying for the dead. Wulfric, a priest in Wiltshire, had "a great devotion" for chanting requiems. He died about midnight; and, soon afterwards, a brother-priest went into the church to chant the first service of the day. He sees, rising from the graves in the pavement, figures like children, clad in white: they are departed souls for whom Wulfric has said mass, and who, after prayer for his repose, return into their sepulchres. This short story is well told by the poet. There is yet greater force, with a singularly striking air of ghostly wildness, in a much longer piece, a legend of Saint Augustin, the apostle of the Saxons in England. Students of foreign literature will be interested in observing that, in the seventeenth century, the Spanish poet Calderon founded one of his most famous dramas on a similar story. The poem begins with a tedious history of tithes from Melchisedec downwards, summed up with a warning which the tale is intended to make more emphatic. Visiting a village called Compton, Austin endeavours in vain to make the lord of the manor abandon a resolution he had long acted on, of refusing to pay tithe. The saint, on beginning to say mass in the church, sternly commands that every man who is not in a state of grace shall

depart from the holy place. Suddenly a tomb is rent asunder ; and there issues from it a terrific figure, which crosses the churchyard and stands trembling at the gate. But the bold priest continues the service amidst universal consternation. At its close he questions the spectre, who tells him that he had formerly been lord of the manor, had refused to pay tithes, and had died excommunicated. Austin asks him to point out the grave of the priest who had excommunicated him ; and, this being done, he summons the dead priest to arise and absolve the repentant sinner. The second ghost appears, and obeys the order ; and the first one quietly goes to his rest. The living lord of the manor, of course, offers instant payment ; and then, abandoning all his possessions, he follows the saint in his mission through the land. Meanwhile, the resuscitated priest is disposed of, in some very impressive stanzas, after a fashion which the poet himself justly calls strange. Austin, by virtue of his miraculous powers, gives him his choice of returning to his grave, or of accompanying him in his preaching of the gospel. The dead man, after moralizing on the miseries of life, prefers to die again ; and the saint approves his resolution.

3. Stephen Hawes, writing in the reign of Henry the Seventh, might be referred either to the fifteenth century or the next. He is remembered as the author of " *The Pastime of Pleasure*," a long allegorical poem, in the same taste as the *Romance of the Rose*. It is whimsical and tedious, but graced, in its personifications, with much more of invention than any other English work near its time ; and it exhibits the language as having now assumed, in all essentials, the form in which it was used by the great poets of the Elizabethan age. The prince Graunde Amour, or Great Love, relates in it the history of his own life and death. Inspired, by the report of Fame, with affection for La Bel Pucell, (the Fair Maiden,) he is required to make himself worthy of her, by accepting instruction in the Tower of Doctrine. He is there received and taught by the Lady Grammar, and by her sisters Logic, Rhetoric, Arithmetic, and Music ; the poet kindly allowing the reader to partake fully in the lessons. Music introduces him to La Bel Pucell, from whom he is then separated, to learn yet more in the Tower of Geometry ; and he has afterwards to visit the Tower of Chivalry, and there to be made a knight. He thence goes out on adventures, worships in the temples of Venus and Pallas, is deceived by the dwarf False Report, and kills a giant who has three heads, entitled Imagination, Falsehood, and Perjury. Afterwards he is married to his lady, and lives happily with her ; till he is made prisoner by Age, who gives him Policy and Avarice for companions. At length he



is slain by Death, buried by Dame Mercy, and has his epitaph engraved by Remembrance.

The emblematical incidents and characters which have thus been sketched, recall to us the allegorical school of poetry which was so widely spread throughout the middle ages, and in which Chaucer did not disdain to study. The recollection of them, again, will be useful, when, in becoming acquainted with the Elizabethan master-pieces, we shall see the same turn of thought prevailing in Spenser's immortal *Faerie Queene*.

4. In quitting this period, we bid adieu to the Metrical Romances. The introduction of these into our tongue had begun, as we have learned, in the latter half of the thirteenth century; and they continued to be composed frequently till about the middle of the fifteenth. They were, to the last, almost always translations or imitations; but some of the later specimens both show much improvement in literary art, and embrace an increasing variety of topics. The chivalrous stories next began to be usually related in Prose. The most famous of the romances in this shape is also one of the best specimens of our old language, and, with hardly an exception, the most delightful of all repositories of romantic fictions. It is the "*Mort Arthur*," in which, in the reign of Edward the Fourth, Sir Thomas Mallory, a priest, probably using French compilations in prose, combined into one narrative the leading adventures of the Round Table.

As the Romances ceased to be produced, the Ballads may be said to have gradually taken their place. Indeed, many of these are just fragments of the metrical romances; and many others are abridgments of them. Our oldest ballad-poetry arose, perhaps, out of attempts to communicate to a popular audience, possessed of little leisure and less patience, the same kind of amusement and excitement which the recital of the romances had been designed to produce among the nobles.

The best of our extant ballads, both Scottish and English, belong, with few exceptions, to the time of Mary Queen of Scots and her English kinswoman and jailer. But the latter half of the fifteenth century appears to have been very fertile both in minstrels and in minstrelsy.

All of us know the famous old chant of which Sir Philip Sidney said, that he could not hear it without feeling himself roused as if by the blast of a trumpet. "*Chevy Chase* seems to be the most ancient of those ballads that has been preserved. It may possibly have been written while Henry the Sixth was on the throne. The style is often fiery, like the old war-songs, and much



above the feeble, though natural and touching, manner of the later ballads. One of the most remarkable circumstances about this celebrated lay is, that it relates a totally fictitious event with all historical particularity, and with real names. Hence it was probably not composed while many remembered the days of Henry the Fourth, when the story is supposed to have occurred."\*

The distinguished critic whose words have just been quoted, is unhesitatingly of opinion that the Scottish ballads are much superior to the English: and it is also allowed, universally, that those which were produced in the border-counties of both kingdoms have much greater poetic merit, both through their spirited energy, and through the imaginative use they make of local superstitions, than such as had their birth in the more southerly provinces.

Of the latter, indeed, the only very interesting examples are those which celebrate the deeds of Robin Hood, and which, though the incidents are placed in the midland counties, are in many points curiously like the border-minstrelsy. The gentle and generous robber of Sherwood Forest is a personage probably as unreal as the hunting of the Percy in the wilds of Cheviot Fell. There is very little substance in the theory which would make him to have been a Saxon, manfully resisting the Norman oppressors. Yet the idea which this hypothesis involves is not uninteresting. Both in old histories, and in a curious Latin biography lately discovered, we are made acquainted with the adventures of a real hero, Hereward of Brunne in Lincolnshire. This popular chief, leading a band of Saxons into the marshes of Ely, thence made for years destructive forays on the possessions of the Normans, and at length forced William the Conqueror to a treaty; perishing, however, afterwards by treachery or in a domestic broil. We know, too, that similar rebellions were not infrequent for more generations than one. Many exploits of the leaders were doubtless preserved traditionally by the conquered race, and were at hand to be woven into any stories that might be founded on the deeds of other champions. But, further, even when the national hatred for the Normans had died away, hatred of the nobility was kept up by the tyrannical forest-laws. It is as a champion of the commonalty against these, that Robin Hood is distinctively presented to us: and the sense of wrong which they had awakened in the breasts of the peasantry could not be embodied more forcibly, than in the affectionate flattery with which the minstrels beautify his character.

5. During this unhappy age, the spirit of metaphysical specula-

\* Hallam: Introduction to the Literature of Europe.

tion, and the zeal for classical learning, had alike died away. We might suppose erudition to have been really extinct; were it not that a few Latin histories have been bequeathed to us by ecclesiastics of the time, and a celebrated law-treatise by Sir John Fortescue. Ineffectual attempts at encouraging literature are recorded as having been made by a few men of rank. Shakspeare has poetized the tragical fate which destroyed two of these; "the good Duke Humphrey" of Gloucester, and the accomplished Earl of Rivers, a writer as well as a patron of literary men.

History having previously begun to be written in English, the return to Latin as its organ was a symptom, not less decided than the spirit shown in Lydgate's poetry, of retrogression towards conventual and scholastic habits. A re-adoption, yet more awkward, of antiquated modes of communication, was practised in the first half of the century by John Hardyng, who, writing a Chronicle of England in the English tongue, couched it wholly in verse. This man, too, was no ecclesiastic, but a soldier, and an active and dexterous political agent. Despatched, by Henry the Fifth, on a secret mission into Scotland, he brought back documents establishing beyond controversy, if they were genuine, the dependence of the Scottish crown on that of England. The fault of his most decisive articles of proof was this, that they proved a great deal too much: we have our choice of believing, either that he forged, or that he was the tool of others who did so.

In the vernacular prose, we have hardly any thing higher than Fabyan's gossiping "Concordance of Histories."

But, both in prose and in verse, some accessions were made to our language, through translation from the French, by a writer whose claim to honour rests on surer grounds than his own literary compositions.

b. ab. 1412. } A mighty revolution took place. William Caxton, a  
d. 1492. } merchant of London, residing abroad on business, became acquainted with the recently invented art of printing, and embraced it as a profession. He introduced it into England, probably in 1474, and practised it for nearly twenty years with extraordinary ardour and intelligence. The works which he printed were in all about sixty-four, some of them bulky, and none very small: an amount of activity which we should much undervalue, if we did not recollect the great mechanical difficulties which, then and long afterwards, impeded the process. All the publications that were certainly his, except two or three, are in English, many of them translations; almost all of them are of a popular cast, and indicate, as it has correctly been remarked, a low

state of taste and information in the public for which they were designed.

But Caxton's enterprise and patience unquestionably hastened the time when this mighty discovery became available to our nation : and his name deserves to stand, with honour, at the close of the survey we have made of English Literature during the middle ages. Literary works, thenceforth, were not only to be incalculably more abundant, but to undergo, by degrees, in almost all departments, a total change of character ; a change brought about indeed by several concurrent causes, but by none more active than the discarding of the manuscript and the substitution of the printed book.

#### THE FOURTEENTH AND FIFTEENTH CENTURIES IN SCOTLAND.

6. While we studied the progress of literature in England from the Norman Conquest to the close of the thirteenth century, we were not tempted to turn aside by any important monuments of intellect in the northern quarter of the island. Scotland, divided, at the beginning of the period, among hostile and dissimilar races, was but gradually settling down into a compact kingdom, and offered few encouragements for the cultivation of the arts of peace. From the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, it is true, there might be collected the names of a very few scholastic theologians, whose works have survived, and who were of Scottish birth : but, with hardly an exception, these men, such as Richard, prior of Saint Victor in Paris, spent their lives on the continent. This was also the case with Michael Scot, a native of Fifeshire, whose fame, as a scientific man or a wizard, was chiefly gained in Germany and Italy, at the court of the emperor Frederick the Second. The extant writings of Scot are universally admitted to give him no claim to remembrance, comparable in any degree with that which belongs to his contemporary Bacon. Thomas Lermont, again, the Rhymer of Ercildoune or Earlstoun, has left us no data whatever for estimating the grounds of his traditional celebrity : for his prophecies are clumsy forgeries ; and the allegation that he wrote the romance of Sir Tristrem is founded on mistake.

7. The fourteenth century has bequeathed to us several noted names and works.

Its only valuable monument in the Latin tongue is the "Scoti-chronicon" of John of Fordun, probably a canon of Aberdeen, which may fairly stand comparison with the more judicious and trustworthy of the earlier English histories. Closing with the

death of David the First, it was brought down to that of James the First by Walter Bower, abbot of Inchcolm.

A livelier interest belongs to two Metrical works in the living tongue, both of which belong to that age.

The later of these in date was the "Original Cronykil" of  
*b. ab. 1350. } Andrew Wyntoun, prior of Saint Serf's in Lochleven,*  
*d. aft. 1420. }* which is a history, in nine books, partly of Scotland,  
 partly of the world at large. Far from being without worth as a  
 record of facts, it is totally destitute of poetical merit.

Not so is it with a work which immediately preceded it, "The  
*b. ab. 1316. }* Bruce" of John Barbour, archdeacon of Aberdeen, a  
*d. 1396. }* narrative poem, containing more than thirteen thousand  
 rhymed octosyllabic lines. It relates the adventures of the heroic  
 King Robert, with a spirit and clearness in narrative, a dramatic  
 vigour in the depicting of character, and an occasional breadth of  
 reflective sentiment, which entitle this, our oldest genuine monument  
 of the Teutonic language of Scotland, to be ranked as being really  
 an excellent poem. If we were to compare it with the contemporary  
 poetry of England, its place would be very high, Chaucer being set  
 aside as unapproachable. Barbour must be pronounced much  
 superior to Gower, and still more so to the anonymous writers of  
 the very best of the metrical romances.

With the romances, indeed, not with the metrical chronicles, the  
 Bruce should perhaps be classed, in respect of the freedom with  
 which it interweaves invented details into its web of historical  
 facts. Yet the romantic licence is used with much discretion.  
 The outline of the events is faithful to the truth: the hero, al-  
 though he is certainly a knight-errant rather than a leader of hosts,  
 does not often exert the fabulous prowess which he displays on one  
 occasion, when, single-handed, he defends a pass against three hun-  
 dred wild men of Galloway; and the only introduction of super-  
 natural agency is in the account of the siege of Berwick, where  
 the poet briefly describes, as a miracle, the impunity with which the  
 women and children carried up arrows and stones to the Scottish de-  
 fenders of the ramparts. Indeed the work is wonderfully little tinged  
 with those superstitions, which we have seen emerging so often in  
 the poetry of the middle ages. The poet does, it is true, attribute  
 the king's early calamities, not to his slaughter of Comyn, but to  
 his having committed sacrilege by slaying his enemy at the altar;  
 but his hints as to the popular sciences of astrology and necro-  
 mancy indicate, at once, a characteristic cautiousness which might  
 perhaps be regarded as national, and an enlightenment of opinion  
 for which we should hardly have looked. The prevalent calmness



of tone and sobriety of judgment give, by contrast, additional force to the animated passages describing warfare and peril. Several of these are both boldly conceived, and executed with very great spirit. Such are the desperate combat in which Bruce lost the brooch of Lorn; and the adventure in which he baffles the blood-hound of the men of the isles, with the attempted assassination which is its sequel. Nor is the fierce love of warfare unrelieved by gentler touches, which occur both in the portraiture of characters, in the events chosen for record, and in the sentiments expressed by the poet. Sir Walter Scott, whose "Lord of the Isles" owes much to "The Bruce," and might profitably be compared with it, has not forgotten one of the finest of those passages; in which we are told how the king, pursued by a superior force, ordered his band to turn and face the enemy, rather than abandon to them a poor woman who had been seized with illness. There are likewise not a few pleasing fragments of landscape-painting: and one of these is made unusually picturesque by having, as its main feature, the mysterious signal-fires that were seen blazing on the Scottish shore, and tempted Bruce to a dangerous landing.

In respect of language we do not, in Wyntoun and Barbour, reach the point of a distinct separation between England and Scotland. If unessential peculiarities of spelling are disregarded, Barbour's work may be said to be composed in Northern English. Its style differs chiefly from that of Chaucer and his contemporaries, in being much more purely Saxon than theirs; the writer showing, indeed, no symptoms of that familiarity with French poetry, which caused so extensive an importation of foreign words into the literary diction of the south. It is not, however, to be forgotten, that the arch-deacon seems to have had English inclinations: he travelled to Oxford for study after he had become a beneficed priest.

8. In passing to the fifteenth century, we do not discover any traces of a dialect distinctively Scottish in the earliest poem it presents. It is the King's Quair, (or Book,) in which the accomplished King James the First celebrated the lady whom he married. But the royal poet was educated in England, and probably wrote there: and his pleasing poem exhibits, in its allegories and personifications, and in its whole cast of thought, the influence exerted by his study of those English writers of the preceding age, whom he himself respectfully acknowledges as his masters.

The development of the language of Scotland into a distinct dialect must, even then, have fairly begun. It went on rapidly afterwards; and it was attended by a great partiality to Chaucer and his contemporaries and followers, with a fondness still greater



for their French models. In no long time there arose also a taste for Latin reading, which influenced the style of poetry yet more strongly.

None of the foreign influences is to be traced, (unless it may be in the use of Chaucer's heroic stanza,) in the "Wallace" of Henry the Minstrel, oftener called Blind Harry. This old poem was once much more popular in Scotland than the Bruce; and it was likely to be so, on account of the more picturesque character of its incidents, its strain of passionate fervour, and the wildness of fancy which inspires some of its parts. It is altogether, notwithstanding its formidable bulk, a work whose origin might naturally be attributed to the class of men to which its author is said to have belonged; the same class who, then and afterwards, were enriching the northern language of the island with our ancient ballads.

Towards the close of the century, and in the beginning of the next, Scottish poetry, now couched in a dialect decidedly peculiar, was cultivated by men of higher genius than any that had yet appeared in Great Britain since the dawn of civilisation, the father of our poetical literature being alone excepted. One of d. ab. }  
1500. } them was Robert Henryson, supposed to have been a monk or schoolmaster in Dunfermline. His most elaborate work was his "Testament of Faire Creseide," a continuation, excellently versified and finely poetical, of a piece of Chaucer's. This Scottish poem indeed is so exceedingly beautiful in many of its parts, so poetical in fancy, so rich in allegory, and often so touching in sentiment, that one cannot help regretting deeply the poet's unfortunate choice of a theme. Probably its unpleasant character is the reason why the work is so little known, even by those who are familiar with our early literature. At all events, Henryson is oftenest named for his beautiful pastoral of "Robin and Makyne," one of the gems of Percy's "Reliques."

More vigorous both in thought and fancy, though inferior in skill b. ab. 1474. }  
d. 1522. } of expression, was Gawain or Gavin Douglas, bishop of Dunkeld, famous alike as an active politician, a man of learning, and a poet. His "King Hart," and "Palace of Honour," are complex allegories, of the kind with which we have become acquainted through other specimens. His Translation of the *Æneid*, into heroic verse, is a very animated poem, not more unfaithful to the original than it might have been expected to be; and it is embellished with original prologues, of which some are energetically descriptive, and others actively critical. This was, it should be remembered, the earliest attempt made, in any part of our island, to render classical poetry into the living language of the country.

b. ab. 1465. } 9. William Dunbar, a native of Lothian, was the best  
 d. ab. 1520. } British poet of his age, and almost a great one. He appears to have been educated for the church, and to have spent some of his early years as a begging friar. Afterwards he became a dependant on the court of the dissolute prince who perished at Flodden. His poems exhibit a versatility of talent which has rarely been paralleled, and a moral inconsistency which it is humiliating to contemplate. In his comic and familiar pieces there prevails such a grossness, both of language and of sentiment, as destroys the effect of their remarkable force of humour: nor is ribaldry altogether wanting in those serious compositions, which are so admirable for their originality and affluence of imagination. Allegory is Dunbar's favourite field. It is the groundwork of his "Golden Terge," in which the target is Reason, a protection against the assaults of Love; and his "Thistle and Rose" commemorates, in a similar way, the king's marriage with an English princess. "The Dance of the Seven Deadly Sins" is wonderfully striking, both for the boldness of the leading conception, and for the significant picturesqueness of several of the personifications. Unfortunately it would be almost impossible to describe, decorously, either the design of this remarkable poem, the imaginative originality which colours the serious passages, or the audacious flight of humorous malice with which, in the close, the Saxon vents the scorn he felt for his Celtic countrymen.

"In the poetry of Dunbar, we recognise the emanations of a mind adequate to splendid and varied exertion; a mind equally capable of soaring into the higher regions of fiction, and of descending into the humble walk of the familiar and ludicrous. He was endowed with a vigorous and well-regulated imagination; and to it was superadded that conformation of the intellectual faculties which constitutes the quality of good sense. In his allegorical poems we discover originality and even sublimity of invention; while those of a satirical kind present us with striking images of real life and manners. As a descriptive poet, he has received superlative praise. In the mechanism of poetry he evinces a wonderful degree of skill. He has employed a great variety of metres; and his versification, when opposed to that of his most eminent contemporaries, will appear highly ornamented and poetical."\*

While Scotland, notwithstanding the troubles which marked almost uninterruptedly the reigns of the Jameses, was thus redeeming the poetical character of the fifteenth century from the discredit thrown on it by the feebleness of the art in England, her living

\* Irving: *Lives of the Scottish Poets*.

tongue was, until very near the end of this period, used in versified compositions only. Scottish prose does not appear, in any literary shape, till the first decade of the sixteenth century : and its earliest specimens were nothing more than translations.

Nor did Scottish learning take, in that age, more than its very first steps. The necessity of a systematic cultivation of philosophy and classical literature had, indeed, begun to be acknowledged. The university of Saint Andrews was founded in the year 1411, and that of Glasgow in 1450. But hardly any immediate effect was produced except this ; that the style of most of the poets, especially Douglas, was deformed by a fondness for words formed from the Latin, which were introduced in as great numbers as French terms had been by Chaucer and his followers.

The art of printing was not practised in Scotland till the very close of our period, when it was introduced in Edinburgh. The oldest of the extant books, which is a miscellaneous volume, chiefly filled with ballads and metrical romances, bears the date of 1508.

## PART SECOND.

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### THE ORIGIN AND GROWTH OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE.

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#### CHAPTER I.

##### THE ANGLO-SAXON PERIOD.

A. D. 449—A. D. 1066.

##### INTRODUCTION OF THE CONSTITUENT ELEMENTS OF THE LANGUAGE.

1. The Families of European Tongues—The Celtic, Gothic, and Classical—The Anglo-Saxon a Germanic Tongue of the Gothic Stock.—2. Founders of the Anglo-Saxon Race in England—Jutes, Saxons, Angles—The Old Frisic Dialect.—3. History of the Anglo-Saxon Tongue—Prevalence of the Dialect of the West Saxons—Two Leading Dialects—The Saxon—The Anglian or Northumbrian.—4. What Dialect of Anglo-Saxon passed into the Standard English Tongue?—5. Close Resemblance of the Anglo-Saxon Tongue to the English—Illustrated by Examples.—6. 7. Alfred's Tale of Orpheus and Eurydice—Literal Translation and Notes.—8. Cædmon's Destruction of Pharaoh—Translated with Notes.

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[It is hoped that this slight sketch has been so framed as to be available, not only for private study, but also for use in teaching; although, by reason of the nature of the matter, lessons cannot be given from it with the same smoothness and ease as from the Literary Chapters. It may be used in any of several ways.

On the one hand, an attempt has been made, through the Translations and Notes appended to the Extracts, to include within the four corners of the book every explanation that could absolutely be required, although the student were not to have the aid of an instructor. The Text, on the other hand, if read without the Extracts and their apparatus, furnishes a plain sunnary, from which all the leading facts and doctrines may be learned, in

cases where it seems unadvisable to undertake a closer scrutiny. Indeed a great deal of knowledge might be gained from the Fourth Chapter alone, the study of which cannot be difficult for any one.

Or, again, these Chapters may furnish three successive courses of study, progressively increasing in difficulty. The first would embrace the Fourth Chapter, in which the results of the historical survey are summed up. The second would carry the student through the Text of the First, Second, and Third Chapters, the Extracts being passed over. In the third course, the Extracts would be studied carefully, with such re-perusal of the Text as might be found convenient.

All that is here given, however, barely deserves to be called so much as an Introduction to the Study of the English Tongue. Nothing more is aimed at than pointing out a method of investigation, and showing that the method is not only easy, but productive of interesting and valuable conclusions.

Exact and systematic acquaintance with the history and structure of our noble language must be gained in riper studies, guided by manuals more learned and copious. The inquiry has been prosecuted with great acuteness and ingenuity in Dr Latham's "English Language" and Grammars; and, to say nothing of other meritorious works, the chief results of recent philological speculations are perspicuously summed up and ably commented on in Professor Craik's "Outlines of the History of the English Language."

From these books it will appear, how incalculably important the Anglo-Saxon Tongue is, both to our vocabulary and to our grammar. We may see the same thing at a glance, by opening the English, Scottish, and Anglo-Saxon Dictionaries of Richardson, Jamieson, and Bosworth. It is a fact not to be concealed, that every one who would learn to understand English as thoroughly as an accomplished scholar ought to understand it, must be content to begin by mastering Rask's excellent "Anglo-Saxon Grammar," (in Thorpe's translation,) or at least the useful epitome given in Bosworth's "Essentials." For practice in reading this, our mother-tongue, full and well-explained specimens are now accessible, especially in Mr Thorpe's "Analecta," and other works of the same distinguished philologist; as well as in the publications of Mr Kemble, and other eminent Anglo-Saxon scholars. Mr. Guest's "History of English Rhythms" should be consulted particularly.

To the books now named, with some others, these chapters are indebted for all their principal facts and opinions; and they communicate, it is believed, as much of the fruits of our improved philology as the limits and purpose of the volume would allow. In the few instances where the teachers are dissented from, or their reasonings pressed a step or two beyond their own inferences, the deviation is not made without the hesitating deference justly due to critics, who have, for the first time, laid down a firm foundation for English Grammar to stand on.]

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1. THE pedigree of the English language is very clear. It is, as we have seen, directly descended from the Anglo-Saxon, but derives much from the Norman-French, and much also from the Latin. We must now learn more exactly the position which these three hold among the European tongues.

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The Languages spoken in modern Europe are usually distributed into four or five groups. All the tongues that have ever been used by nations inhabiting our islands, are comprehended in three of these. The first of the three, the Celtic, was introduced before either of the others, in both of its branches, the Cymric and the Gaelic, and continues to be the speech of considerable sections of our people: but it has not exercised on the language of the mass of the nation any appreciable influence. The tongues with which we are at present concerned are embraced in two other European groups; the Gothic, and the Classical or Græco-Roman.

The Gothic Languages of the continent are distributable into two stocks or main branches, the Germanic or Teutonic, and the Scandinavian. Those of the former branch presenting two distinct types, all the Gothic Languages may be said to fall into three great families; and these are distinguished from each other by well-marked characteristics. The First family comprehends those tongues which were used by the tribes occupying the hilly regions of Southern Germany, and which thence have been called High-German. It is one of these that has been developed into the standard German: but our mother-tongue was not among them. The Second family was the Scandinavian, the farthest north of the three. Its principal member still exists with little change in the Icelandic, out of which have grown up the modern Swedish and Danish. The Norwegians and Danes, by whom our blood and speech have been to a small degree affected, were Scandinavians. Thirdly, the name of Low-German has been given to the Gothic languages which were spoken in the plains of Northern Germany, and of which, in modern times, the leading example is the Dutch. The Anglo-Saxon, in all its varieties, was essentially a Low-German tongue. As being such, it is more nearly allied to the High-German than it is to the Scandinavian.

The Classical group of European Tongues embraced, in ancient times, the Greek and the Latin. From the latter of these have flowed three modern languages: the Italian; the Spanish, with its variety the Portuguese; and the French, which, as we learned in our literary survey, was long broken up provincially into two dialects. The French elements of our speech come from the dialect of Northern France, which has since passed into the standard French language.

2. According to the old traditions reported by our historians, the settlers who founded the Anglo-Saxon race in England belonged to three Gothic tribes, whose continental seats had lain along the North Sea and on the southern shores of the Baltic.

The Jutes or South Jutlanders were the first invaders, but by far the least numerous. They are said to have hardly occupied more than the county of Kent, and were speedily lost among the more powerful colonies that followed. Accordingly, their history is in every view unimportant.

Next came, in succession, several large bodies of Saxons. They gradually filled the southern districts of England, between Cornwall or Devonshire on the south, Kent on the east, and the course of the rivers Thames and Severn to the north and north-west; passing northward also, in their latest migrations, considerably beyond the valley of the Thames. Both the lineage of our Saxons, and their place on the continent, have always been matters of dispute: indeed the name was given, in the Dark Ages, to several tribes, who spread themselves widely through Germany, and would seem to have been, in part at least, united by confederacy only, not closely by blood. The utmost assertion we can safely make is this; that our Saxon immigrants must have come from some part of the sea-coast between the mouth of the Eyder and that of the Rhine.

The third tribe of invaders were the Angles or Engle, who are described as having been very numerous, and who, in the end, gave their name to the whole country. The territory which they seized extended northward from the north border of the Saxons to the Frith of Forth; and it embraced within that range all the provinces, both English and Scottish, to the east of those which were still for a time held by the Cymric Celts. They are usually said to have emigrated from the small district of Anglen, which lies in the west of the modern duchy of Schleswig.

Some recent antiquaries have endeavoured to throw discredit on all the particulars of this ancient story. It does bear one difficulty on the face of it. So narrow a tract as Anglen cannot well have furnished the large body of emigrants which it is said to have poured into England; hardly even if it was left unpeopled, as Bede asserts it to have been for generations afterwards. But, although the doubts thus raised were to be confirmed, our real knowledge of our ancestors would remain as it was, neither diminished nor increased.

The truth is, that very little light is thrown on the origin or character of the Anglo-Saxon tongue, by the venerable history which is perpetuated in its name. When we search for points of comparison among the old Gothic tongues of the continent, we find none such that is attributed to any nation called Angles. As to those, again, that were spoken by the continental Saxons in their extensive wanderings, none has been preserved that comes very close to our insular mother-tongue; excepting only that which our

antiquaries at present call the old Saxon: and of it the surviving monuments are neither numerous nor ancient enough to afford a solid foundation for comparison.

The most instructive fact which has been discovered is this. Of all the old Gothic tongues that are tolerably well known, that which the Anglo-Saxon resembles most nearly is the Old Frisic, a Low-German dialect, which was once spoken extensively between the Rhine and the Elbe, and is the parent of the Modern Dutch. The Frisic, then, or a Low-German dialect very like it, must have been in use among the mass of our Teutonic invaders, by whatever names they may have called themselves, or been known by the imperfectly informed historians who lived soon after they crossed into our island.

3. Before the battle of Hastings, the Anglo-Saxon tongue had been spoken in England for at least six hundred years. During that period, it cannot but have undergone many changes. Further, those who imported it belonged, almost certainly, to different Low-German tribes; and their descendants, who inhabited our island, were long divided into several hostile nations. Therefore there must have been dialectic varieties in the several regions of their British territory.

The history, both of our language and of its founders, would be pertinently illustrated by any information that could be gained, regarding either those successive changes, or those contemporaneous local varieties. But of the former we know nothing whatever, and of the latter not very much. The evidence as to both was destroyed by circumstances emerging in the course of the national progress.

The long conflict between the several states usually known as the Heptarchy, was brought to a close, early in the ninth century, by the subjection of all of them to the kings of Wessex, or the Land of the West Saxons, whose hereditary realm may be said to have had its centre in Berkshire and Hants. Accordingly, the speech of the Saxons or Southern Anglo-Teutons, with any peculiarities it may have had in Wessex, came to be the ruling language, both of government, and of such literature as was to be found. The use of it, as the instrument of literary communication, was extended and permanently confirmed by the example and influence of Alfred, himself a native of Berks.

Now, our Anglo-Saxon remains, with very few exceptions, are of the age of Alfred, or less ancient; and such as are more recent than his time, were naturally, in most cases, composed in the dialect which he had made classical. Nor is this all. Our scanty

remains of an older time, even when they must have been first written in other dialects, (as in the case of Cædmon, who was a North Anglian,) have reached us only in manuscripts of more recent date; and in these the copyists have probably modernized not a little, and have certainly left few traces of local peculiarities deviating from those of Wessex. Indeed, when we consider that our oldest manuscripts are not nearly so old as the time of Alfred, we can hardly believe that we possess even the works of his time, free from all alterations intended to accommodate them to more modern fashions of speech.

In spite of these impediments, however, we do possess some evidence of dialectic differences. It is gathered, in the first instance, from a few ecclesiastical manuscripts written in the Anglian kingdom of Northumbria, which extended from the Humber to the Scottish Friths; and its results are confirmed by a comparison with relics of the middle ages exhibiting dialectic varieties, and by an examination of the modern dialects spoken in the North of England. Inferences may be founded also on the names of places; although, for several reasons, these must be used with great caution.\*

We are thus entitled to assert that all the local varieties of the Anglo-Saxon were referable to the one or the other of two leading Dialects, a Northern and a Southern. The Anglian or Northumbrian dialect, while possessing the Low-German character in all essentials, was unlike the Southern or Saxon in several minor features, some of which, though not many, were distinctively Scandinavian.

Whence these Scandinavian features were derived, is a disputed question among our philologists. Some have attributed them wholly to the many settlements which, in the later Anglo-Saxon times, the Danes effected in the north-east of England. One of the proofs by which this theory is supported is furnished by the names of places. Many of these, still preserved, indicate unequivocally the presence of the Danes in the North-Eastern counties of England as far southward as the Wash of Lincoln, and thence a short way to the south-west; while names of the same origin stretch westward into Westmoreland and Cumberland, districts, however, in which the British Celts long kept their ground. It is also a curious fact, that the Scandinavian features are more decided in the more recent Anglian manuscripts than in those that are older.†

\* One very interesting Northumbrian monument, which has now been fully deciphered, is the inscription engraved on an ancient cross, which stands, at this day, in the manse-garden at Ruthwell in Dumfries-shire.

† Garnett: in the Transactions of the Philological Society: Vol. II. 1846.



Other scholars find, in the Scandinavian features, a confirmation of the tradition which brought the Angles from a land bordering closely on Scandinavia. If this was their old abode, their Low-German tongue may naturally have been tinctured by some Norse peculiarities.\* It is admitted, indeed, that the territorial boundaries of the two leading dialects cannot be exactly identified with those which the current history assigns as having separated the Angles and the Saxons. The Northern dialect has not been traced satisfactorily over the whole of the Anglian ground. But it is maintained that this fact has been caused by those political changes, which speedily separated the most southerly sections of the Angles from their Northumbrian brethren, and subjected them in all respects to Saxon influence; that, notwithstanding, Anglian elements are still traceable in dialects spoken as far south as the Thames; and that these can be shown to have prevailed yet more extensively in the same provinces during the middle ages.

It may be worth while to remark, that the two theories are not properly contradictory of each other. The dialect of the Angles may have been in some points Scandinavian; and the Danes may afterwards have ingrafted on it other peculiarities of the same sort.

4. Leaving this question, however, as undecided, we ought to remember, also, that, although the two dialects only are traceable in our relics of the Anglo-Saxon period, dialectic varieties much more numerous showed themselves in no long time after the Norman conquest. A writer of the fourteenth century asserts peremptorily, that there were then spoken in England three dialects, a Southern, a Midland, and a Northern. Some such division had probably arisen much earlier; and several of our philologists insist on distributing our mediæval dialects into a still larger number of groups.

The consideration of dialect, indeed, presents a mine of curious inquiry, which might be worked along the whole history of our language. But the vein has been little more than opened by our philological antiquaries: and the interesting speculations they have proposed are still too fragmentary, as well as too special, to be useful to us in these elementary studies.

We may put to ourselves, however, before passing onward to observe the decay of our mother-tongue, one question which some of our scholars have endeavoured to answer. Which of the dialects of the Anglo-Saxon is specifically the parent of the English Language?

\* Rask, himself a Dane, is of opinion, not only that his countrymen did not corrupt our tongue, but that we corrupted theirs. The Danish departs further from its Icelandic root than the Swedish does; and the critic dates the deviation from the establishment of Canute's throne in England.



It is not necessarily the classical Saxon of Wessex. The circumstances of the centuries next after the Norman Conquest were such as would make this unlikely rather than otherwise. That dialect had quite lost its political and social supremacy. It still possessed, no doubt, the influence due to it as the organ of the older literary monuments; but these, there is much reason to suppose, were little studied by most of those who guided the corruption of the ancient tongue, or its transformation into the new. When any thing like literary composition was attempted, in the early Norman times, by natives using their own language, each writer seemingly aimed at nothing more than expressing his meaning, as he best could, through the words and idioms that were familiar in his neighbourhood.

Besides this, in the transition-stage of the language, we are tempted to look, both for original writers and for copyists of manuscripts, chiefly to those Midland counties which had lain within the Saxon kingdom of Mercia, counties whose Teutonic colonists had been Angles, but which had for centuries been subjected to the government and influence of the Saxons of Wessex. These counties became soon the seats of the universities; they abounded in rich monasteries and other religious foundations; and, when we reach a time in which the new language was freely used in literature, we find a large proportion of its efforts to have issued from that quarter. There, accordingly, the English tongue is by some critics alleged to have had its birth.

In support of this theory, it has been argued, that, if Wessex gave the law to our language, the provincial speech of Berkshire and the neighbouring districts, which is admittedly liker to the written Anglo-Saxon than any other of our modern dialects is, ought also to be that which deviates least from the standard English. But it is alleged by competent scholars that this is not its character. The provincial dialect which is most nearly pure is said, though the details still require examination, to be now spoken in Northamptonshire, or in some of the counties immediately surrounding it.\*

On the other hand, it has been maintained, by a very eminent antiquary and philologist, (and the conclusion seems to be highly probable,) that we must be content to seek for the groundwork of

\* Guest's English Rhythms : Latham's English Language. "Before Layamon's 'Brut' was written, a language agreeing much more closely with our standard speech, in words, in idioms, and in grammatical forms, existed in the Eastern Midland district. This form, which we may for the sake of distinction call Anglo-Mercian, was adopted by influential writers and by the cultivated classes of the metropolis; becoming, by gradual modifications, the language of Spenser and Shakspeare." Quarterly Review: Vol. LXXXII.

our language in a gradual coalescence of the leading dialects of all the provinces of England except those that lay furthest north.\* The question, how the coalescence was brought about, opens a very interesting track of speculation.

5. The broad doctrine, that the English Language is the direct offspring of the Anglo-Saxon, cannot be too strongly impressed on our minds. That the fact is so, will be plain to every one who examines a few sentences from our ancient relics, with such previous knowledge, or such accompanying aid, as enables him to comprehend their meaning. We will translate an easy passage, before beginning to watch the process by which the one tongue was gradually transformed into the other.

The resemblance between the Vocabularies of the two is very strikingly shown in this passage. It contains four or five words, which our standard speech in modern times does not possess in any shape, but all of which occur in provincial dialects, and in books not older than Chaucer. It contains about as many others, which perhaps disappeared altogether by the fourteenth century. With these exceptions, all its words bear so near a likeness to some with which we are familiar, that the idea conveyed by each of them might be conjectured by a good English scholar, with little risk of serious error.

As to the Grammatical peculiarities, again, the verbs that occur are so like our own, (except in having the infinitive in -an, and plural forms different from the singular,) that the interlined translation is required rather on account of the uncouth spelling, than for any other reason. The student has to remember, however, that the substantives are declined by termination like the Latin, having all the cases except the vocative and ablative, and that the termination usually fixes the gender; and he must be warned, also, that the adjectives, pronouns, and articles, are similarly declined.

Our Extract is taken from Alfred's loose translation of Boethius "On the Consolation of Philosophy." It is a passage in which he has allowed himself very great scope; substituting, indeed, for one of the metrical pieces of the original, a prose story of his own. He gives us the classical fable, the lying tale, as he calls it, of Orpheus and Eurydice.†

\* "It seems unquestionable, that the dialects of the Western, Southern, and Midland Counties, contributed together to form the language of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and consequently to lay the foundation of Modern English." Sir Frederick Madden's Edition of Layamon's Brut; 1847.

† Thorpe's "Analecta Saxonica" (with Glossary), 1834: Text and Translation compared with Cardale's "Anglo-Saxon Boethius," 1829.

6. We<sup>1</sup> sculon<sup>2</sup> get,<sup>3</sup> of ealdum<sup>4</sup> leasum<sup>5</sup> spellum,<sup>6</sup> the<sup>7</sup>  
*We will now, from old lying tales, to-thee*  
 sum<sup>8</sup> bispell<sup>9</sup> reccan.<sup>10</sup> Hit<sup>11</sup> gelamp<sup>12</sup> gió,<sup>13</sup> thætte án<sup>14</sup>  
*a-certain parable tell. It happened formerly, that a*  
 hearpere wæs, on thære<sup>15</sup> theode<sup>16</sup> the<sup>17</sup> Thracia hátte.<sup>18</sup>  
*harper was, in the nation which Thrace was-called.*  
 Thæs<sup>19</sup> náma wæs Orfeus. He hæfde<sup>20</sup> án swithe<sup>21</sup> ænlic<sup>22</sup>  
*His name was Orpheus. He had a very incomparable*  
 wíf<sup>23</sup>. Sió wæs háten<sup>24</sup> Eurydice. Thá<sup>25</sup> ongann<sup>26</sup>  
*wife. She was called Eurydice. Then began*

<sup>1</sup> The First Personal Pronoun: retained in English: sing. nom. *ic*; gen. *mín*; dat. acc. *me*; plur. nom. *we* (dual, *wit*); gen. *úre* (dual, *unser*, German); dat. *us, úr*, or *uns*; acc. *us, úr* (dual, *uns*). Here, and elsewhere, the long vowels are marked with an accent ('), in instances where our modern rules of pronunciation might incline us to suppose them short.

<sup>2</sup> *Scealan*, to owe (the English *shall*, but differently used); imperf. *ic sceolde*, I should.

<sup>3</sup> English, *yet*.

<sup>4</sup> Dat. plur. of adj. *eald*, whence English *eld*, *elder*.

<sup>5</sup> *Leas*, false; whence old English *leasing*. Also, in composition, *void*; whence the English affix *-less*.

<sup>6</sup> Dat. pl. of *spell*, neut. tale, history. In composition, *bispell*, by-tale, example (German, *beispiel*); *godspell*, good-history, gospel.

<sup>7</sup> Second Personal Pronoun (with a dual which has long been lost); sing. nom. *thú*; gen. *thín*; dat. acc. *the*; plur. nom. *ge*; gen. *eower*; dat. acc. *eow*.

<sup>8</sup> English, *some*.

<sup>9</sup> See Note 6.

<sup>10</sup> To reckon; meaning also, when conjugated differently, to reckon or care for.

<sup>11</sup> Third Personal Pronoun; Sing. Masc. nom. *he* (sometimes *se*); gen. *his*; dat. *him*; acc. *hine*; Fem. nom. *heó, seó, sió*; gen. dat. *hire, hyre*; acc. *hi*; Neut. nom. *hit*; gen. *his* (as in the English Bible); dat. *him*; acc. *hit*. Plural in all genders nom. *hi*, (sometimes *hig, heó*); gen. *hira, heora*; dat. *him, heom*; acc. *hi, hig*.

<sup>12</sup> From *gelimpan*, now lost.

<sup>13</sup> A word now lost.

<sup>14</sup> *Án* or *æn*, originally the numeral *one*.

<sup>15</sup> Dat. of Definite Article, which coincides in parts with the third personal pronoun masculine, and with the demonstrative pronoun *that*. Sing. Masc. nom. *se*; gen. *thæs*; dat. *thám*; acc. *thone*; Fem. nom. *seó*; gen. dat. *thare*; acc. *thá*; Neut. nom. *that*; gen. *thæs*; dat. *thám*; acc. *that*. Plural in all genders, nom. acc. *thá*; gen. *thára, thara*; dat. *thám*.

<sup>16</sup> Dat. of *theod* (lost), a people or country.

<sup>17</sup> Relative Pronoun undeclined; substituted in later Anglo-Saxon for the definite article masculine *se*: and thus producing our definite article. A declined relative pronoun is *hwíle* or *hwýle* (old Scottish, *whilk*), compounded of *hwá-lic*, what-like. It passed gradually into the English *which*.

<sup>18</sup> *Hátan*, to have for a name; whence old English *hight*, named, or is named.

<sup>19</sup> Gen. of definite article, used as third personal pronoun.

<sup>20</sup> *Habban*, to have; *he hæfth*, he hath.

<sup>21</sup> *Swith*, *swithor*, *swithost*, much, more, most; adv. from *swith*, strong.

<sup>22</sup> One-like, unique, singular.

<sup>23</sup> *Wíf*, wife, woman; neuter by termination.

<sup>24</sup> See Note 18.

<sup>25</sup> Then, when, as.

<sup>26</sup> Inf. *onginnan*; pret. *ongan*; partic. *ongunnen*. The root is retained in our word *begin* (from *beginnan*).

monn<sup>27</sup> seegan<sup>28</sup> be<sup>29</sup> thám hearpere, thæt<sup>30</sup> he mihte<sup>31</sup> hearpian  
*people to-say regarding the harper, that he could harp*  
 thæt se wudu wagode<sup>32</sup> for thám swege,<sup>33</sup> and wilde deor<sup>34</sup>  
*that the wood moved for the sound, and wild beasts*  
 thær woldon<sup>35</sup> to-irnan<sup>36</sup> and standan<sup>37</sup> swilce<sup>38</sup> hí táme<sup>39</sup>  
*there would to-run and stand as-if they tame*  
 wæron, swá stille, theáh hí menn<sup>40</sup> oththe<sup>41</sup> hundes<sup>42</sup> with<sup>43</sup>  
*were, so still, though them men or hounds against*  
 eódon,<sup>44</sup> thæt hí hí ná ne<sup>45</sup> onscunedon.<sup>46</sup> Thá sædon<sup>47</sup>  
*went, that they them not not shunned. Then said*  
 hí thæt thæs hearperes<sup>48</sup> wíf sceolde<sup>49</sup> acwelan,<sup>50</sup> and hire  
*they that the harper's wife should die, and her*  
 sawle<sup>51</sup> mon<sup>52</sup> sceolde lædan<sup>53</sup> to helle.<sup>54</sup>  
*soul one should lead to Hades.*

<sup>27</sup> *Man or mon*; the same as the French *on*; English, *one* (as, "one would think"); German, *man*. In Anglo-Saxon, *man*, or rather *mann*, signifies also a man; gen. *mannes*; plur. nom. *menn* (regularly *mannas*); gen. *manna*; dat. *mannum*.

<sup>28</sup> Infinitive: having in the pret. sing. *sægde, sæde*; pl. *sædon*.

<sup>29</sup> *Be, bi*, preposition with dat.: signifying by, beside, of, for.

<sup>30</sup> Irregular spelling; see another spelling of the word above.

<sup>31</sup> Or *meakte*, might; from *magan* (whence *may*) to be able.

<sup>32</sup> Pret. from *wagian*, to wag.

<sup>33</sup> Hence Old English *swough* (Chaucer); Scottish, *sough*.

<sup>34</sup> Hardly ever meaning *deer*, except in composition; German, *thier*.

<sup>35</sup> "Rats and mice, and such small deer."—SHAKESPEARE.

<sup>36</sup> *Willan, wyllan*, to will; *ic wille*, I will; *thú wilt*, thou wilt. Pret. *ic wold* or *wolde*; *thú woldest*; *he wold* or *wolde*; *we, ge, hi, woldon*.

<sup>37</sup> Example of a compound form, greatly more common in Anglo-Saxon than in modern English; from *yrnan* or *irnan*, otherwise *rennan* (German, *rennen*), to run.

<sup>38</sup> Inf. *standan*; pres. *ic stande*, *thú stent* or *standest*, *he stent* or *stynt*; pret. *ic stod*, *we stodon*; partic. *gestanden*.

<sup>39</sup> Adv. from *swile* or *swyle* (from *swá*, so; and *ylc*, same), such.

<sup>40</sup> Pl. from *tám*, tame.

<sup>41</sup> See Note 27.

<sup>42</sup> *Eíther*, or; whence the English *other* and (by contraction) *or*.

<sup>43</sup> Sing. nom. acc. *hund*; gen. *hundes*; dat. *hunde*; plur. nom. acc. *hundas*; gen. *hunda*; dat. *hundum*. The *-es* in the plur. nom. and acc. (which confounds those cases with the sing. gen.) is an irregular form, which became more and more frequent as the language decayed, and was one of the steps towards the English.

<sup>44</sup> *Against* or *towards*, retained in English, but with a meaning not usual in Anglo-Saxon: the Anglo-Saxon preposition signifying with is *mid*.

<sup>45</sup> Inf. *gán* or *gangan*; pres. *ic gá* or *gange*, *he gæth*; pret. *ic eóde*, *we eódon*; partic. *gán*, *agæn*, *agán*, *gangen* (Scottish, *gang*, *gae*, *gaen*).

<sup>46</sup> Repetition of negatives; very common in Anglo-Saxon.

<sup>47</sup> Inf. *onscunian*, from *scunian*; whence the English *shun*.

<sup>48</sup> See Note 28.

<sup>49</sup> Gen. of *hearpere*, used above.

<sup>50</sup> See Note 2. Here, as often in Anglo-Saxon and Old English, *scealan* is used, like the German *sollen*, to indicate a reported or indirect recital.

<sup>51</sup> Verb neut. from the act. *cwellan* or *acwellan*, to kill (quell).

<sup>52</sup> Scottish.

<sup>53</sup> See Note 27.

<sup>54</sup> Inf. *lædan* or *gelædan*; pret. *ic lædde*, *gelædde*; part. *gelæded*, *gelæd*, *læded*, *læd*.

<sup>55</sup> Dat. of *hell*; from *Hela*, the goddess of death in the Norse mythology.



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7. Thá thám hearpere thá thúhte,<sup>55</sup> thæt hine nanes<sup>56</sup>  
*When to-the harper then it-seemed, that him of-no*  
 thinges<sup>57</sup> ne lyste<sup>58</sup> on thisse<sup>59</sup> worulde, thá thóhte<sup>60</sup> he  
*thing not it-listed in this world, then thought he*  
 thæt he wolde gangan, and biddan<sup>61</sup> thæt hí him ageafon<sup>62</sup>  
*that he would go, and beg that they to-him give*  
 eft<sup>63</sup> his wíf. \* \* \* Thá he  
*back his wife.*

*When he*  
 thá lange and lange hearpode, thá clypode<sup>64</sup> se cyning,<sup>65</sup> and  
*then long and long harped, then called the king, and*  
 cwæth :<sup>66</sup> “ Uton<sup>67</sup> agifan thám esne<sup>68</sup> his wíf, forthám<sup>69</sup> he  
*said : “ ... give to-the fellow his wife, because he*  
 hí hæfth geearnod :<sup>70</sup> and sæde : gif<sup>71</sup> he hine underbæc<sup>72</sup>  
*her hath earned : and said : if he ..., backward*  
 besawe,<sup>73</sup> thæt he sceolde forlætan<sup>74</sup> thæt wíf. Ac<sup>75</sup> lufe mon  
*looked, that he should lose the woman. But love one*

<sup>55</sup> Inf. *thincan* ; pret. *thúhte* ; partic. *gethúht* ; an impersonal verb, signifying, it seems (whence the English *methinks*). <sup>56</sup> Gen. of *nán*.

<sup>57</sup> Gen. of *thing* ; an example of the origin of our English possessive in 's.

<sup>58</sup> Inf. *lystan* ; pret. *lyste* ; to desire, be pleased with. Generally used impersonally, as here. English, *list*, *lust*.

<sup>59</sup> Nom. masc. *thes* ; fem. *theós* ; neut. *this*, *thys* ; plur. nom. in all genders, *thás*. Oblique cases very various.

<sup>60</sup> Inf. *thencan* (also *bethencan*, *gethencan*), to think ; pret. *thóhte* ; partic. *gethúht*. Compare Note 55.

<sup>61</sup> Inf. *biddan* ; pret. *bæd* ; partic. *beden* ; to beg, to bid ; hence English *beadsmán*.

<sup>62</sup> Or *geafon* ; subj. pret. plur. from inf. *gifan* (or *agifan*) ; pret. *ic geaf*, *gæf*, *gaf* ; *we geafon* ; partic. *gifen*. <sup>63</sup> Back, again, after.

<sup>64</sup> Pret. from inf. *clypian* or *cleopian* ; partic. *geclypod* ; to call, to cry ; whence Old English *yclept*, *iclept*, named.

<sup>65</sup> Otherwise written *cynig*, *cyneg*, and *cyng*.

<sup>66</sup> Inf. *cwethan* ; pret. *cwæth* ; whence old English *quoth*.

<sup>67</sup> Said to be used for giving an imperative power to the infinitive of the verb. An adverb, meaning *without* or *beyond*, from the adverb *ut*, out.

<sup>68</sup> A serf. See the manumission of Gurth in *Ivanhoe*.

<sup>69</sup> *For-that* ; an example of a common kind of Anglo-Saxon adverbs, of which we retain some ; as, *nohwær*, *thæron*, *thærin* ; while we have formed many others on the same principle.

<sup>70</sup> Inf. *earnian* (or *geearnian*) ; part. *geearnod*. When *ge-* is a prefixed augment of derivative parts of the verb (as it still is usually in German participles) it has often been retained by the Old English in the softened form of *y-* or *i-*.

<sup>71</sup> Originally the imperative of *gifan*, to give.

<sup>72</sup> The preposition *under*, and *bæc*, a back ; behind backs,

<sup>73</sup> Inf. *beseón* (from *seón*, to see) ; pret. *ic beseáh*, *thru besawe*, *he besawe* or *beseáh* ; *hine beseón*, to look (literally, to be-see himself, as in the phrase “ to bethink himself.”)

<sup>74</sup> Commonly, to permit, or forsake ; from *for* (prep.) and *lætan*, to let.

<sup>75</sup> Lost in this shape and meaning ; but supposed really the same with *æc*, *ac*, or *éc* (also), which was originally the imperative of *écan*, to eke or add.



mæg<sup>76</sup> swithe uneathe<sup>77</sup> forbeðdan<sup>78</sup>. Wei la wei!<sup>79</sup> Hwæt! \*  
 may very difficultly forbid: Alas! What!  
 \* \* Thá he forth on thæt leoht com,<sup>80</sup> thá  
 When he forth into the light came, then  
 beseáh<sup>81</sup> he hine underbæc, with<sup>82</sup> thæs wifes: thá losede<sup>83</sup>  
 looked he ... backward, towards the woman: then was-lost  
 heó him sona.<sup>84</sup> Thas<sup>85</sup> spell lærath<sup>86</sup> gehwylcne<sup>87</sup> man,  
 she to-him straightway. This story teacheth every man,  
 thæt he hine ne besið<sup>88</sup> to his ealdum<sup>89</sup> yfelum,<sup>90</sup> swá<sup>91</sup> thæt he  
 that he ... not look to his old vices, so that he  
 hí fullfremme,<sup>92</sup> swá he hí ær<sup>93</sup> dyde.<sup>94</sup>  
 them practise, as he them before did.

8. We must not quit our Pure Mother-Tongue without glancing at a specimen of that very singular Poetry, of which she has transmitted to us so many efforts. Its characteristics, both in diction and in versification, have already been briefly explained.

They may be sufficiently illustrated by the few following verses, taken from a passage of Cædmon, which relates the destruction of Pharaoh's host in the Red Sea. That the nature of the metre may be easily perceptible, each half-couplet is marked off in the original by a colon.\*

<sup>76</sup> See Note 31.

<sup>77</sup> Adv. from *uneath* (literally, *un-easy*) ; from *un* privative (German, *ohne*, without), and *eath*, easy.

<sup>78</sup> From *for* (here negative, as the German *ver-*) and *beðdan*, to bid or command ; pret. *beað*, *bide*, *bod* ; partic. *boden*.

<sup>79</sup> Etymology and spelling doubtful ; Old English, *well-away* !

<sup>80</sup> Inf. *cuman* ; pres. *ic cume*, *he cymth* ; pret. *com* ; partic. *cumen*.

<sup>81</sup> See Note 73.

<sup>82</sup> See Note 43.

<sup>83</sup> *Losian*, to lose ; also, as here, to be lost, or to perish.

<sup>84</sup> English, *soon*. The Anglo-Saxon, *sumu*, means son. The Anglo-Saxon *Sunne*, sun : it is feminine because of Norse mythology ; as *mona*, moon, is, for the same reason, masculine.

<sup>85</sup> Used for *this* ; See Note 59.

<sup>86</sup> Inf. *læran* ; substantive *lære*, lore (Scottish, *lair*, *lear*).

<sup>87</sup> Accusative, in the indefinite form, of *gehwylc*, every, whatever ; from *hwylc*, what, which.

<sup>88</sup> Subjunctive. See Note 73.

<sup>89</sup> See Note 4.

<sup>90</sup> Dat. plur. of *yfel*, evil.

<sup>91</sup> *Swá-swá*, so-as.

<sup>92</sup> *Fullfremman*, to fulfil ; from *full*, full, and *fremman*, to frame.

<sup>93</sup> Adv. *earlier*, *ere* ; superlative, *ærst*, soonest, *erst*, first.

<sup>94</sup> Infin. *dōn*, to do ; pres. *ic dō* ; *thú dēst*, *he dēth* or *dóth*, *we dóth* ; pret. *ic dyde*, *thú dydest*, *he dyde* or *did*, *we dydon* ; partic. *gedōn* ; imperat. *dō thū*.

\* Thorpe's "Cædmon's Metrical Paraphrase of Parts of the Holy Scriptures, with an English Translation, Notes, and a Verbal Index," 1832. Conybeare's "Illustrations of Anglo-Saxon Poetry," 1826.

Folc wæs aƿæred :<sup>1</sup> Flód-egsa<sup>2</sup> becwóm :<sup>3</sup>  
 (The) folk was afraid : flood-fear came-in :  
 Gastas<sup>4</sup> gēomre<sup>5</sup> : Geafon deathe-hweop :<sup>6</sup>  
 Ghosts murmuring gave (the) death-whoop :  
 Woldon here<sup>7</sup> bleathe : Hāmas<sup>8</sup> finden :  
 Would (the) host blithely homes find.  
 A'c behindan beleac :<sup>9</sup> Wyrð<sup>10</sup> mid wæge :  
 But behind locked (them) : Fate with (the) wave.  
 Streamas stódon : Storm up-gewát :<sup>11</sup>  
 Streams stood : Storm up-went :  
 Weollon<sup>12</sup> wæl-benna :<sup>13</sup> Wíte-róð<sup>14</sup> gefeol :<sup>15</sup>  
 Rolled corpses (of) men : (the) punishment-rod fell  
 Heáh of heofonum :<sup>16</sup> Hand-weorc Godes.<sup>17</sup>  
 high from heavens, hand-work of-God.

<sup>1</sup> *Afeard*, Old English.

<sup>2</sup> *Egsa* is a rare word, and here obscurely used.

<sup>3</sup> From *becuman* (whence English *become*), to enter, to happen.

<sup>4</sup> Nom. sing. *gast* ; Scottish, *ghaist*.

<sup>5</sup> German, *jammer* ; Scottish, *yammer*.

<sup>6</sup> A fresh instance of the true Saxon form of our modern *wh*.

<sup>7</sup> *Heer*, German. <sup>8</sup> Nom. sing. *hám* ; gen. *hámes* ; Scottish, *hame*.

<sup>9</sup> Inf. *belucan* ; partic. *belocen*.

<sup>10</sup> Old English and Scottish, *weird* ; “ The weird sisters.”—*Macbeth*.

<sup>11</sup> Inf. *gewitan*, to depart.

<sup>12</sup> Pret. of *weallan*, to spring or boil up ; *weall*, *wyll*, or *well*, a well.

<sup>13</sup> *Wæl* (German, *wahlstatt*, a battle-field), slaughter ; thence a dead body. *Benn*, a man (rare).

<sup>14</sup> Substantives were compounded together in Anglo-Saxon, as freely as in modern German. The *wíte* (Scottish for *blame*) was the fine paid to the community by a murderer.

<sup>15</sup> Inf. *feallan* ; pret. *feoll*, *gefeol* ; partic. *gefeallen*.

<sup>16</sup> Dat. plur. of *heofon* ; derived from *heafen*, partic. of *hebban*, to raise, to heave. Another derivative is *heáfod*, a head.

<sup>17</sup> *God*, the Holy Name, (with short vowel,) from the adjective *gód*, good. Inversely, *man* in Anglo-Saxon is used derivatively to mean *sin*.

## CHAPTER II.

## THE SEMI-SAXON PERIOD.

A. D. 1066—A. D. 1250.

## TRANSITION OF THE SAXON TONGUE INTO THE ENGLISH.

1. Character of the Language in this Stage—Duration of the Period.—2. The Kinds of Corruptions—Illustrated by Examples.—3. Extract from the Saxon Chronicle Translated and Analyzed.—4. Layamon's Brut—Analysis of its Language—Comparison with Language of the Chronicle.—5. Extract from Layamon Translated and Analyzed.

1. WE are next to watch the Anglo-Saxon language at the earliest stages in that series of mutations, by which it passed into the Modern English.

When these began, it is not possible to say with precision. It cannot have been much later than the Norman Conquest ; it may have been a century earlier, and probably was so. Our manuscripts show some tokens of them ; and, as there is reason to believe, they appeared soonest in the Northern Dialect.

At present it may suffice for us to know, that the changes assumed, in succession, two very distinct types, marking two eras quite dissimilar.

First came a period throughout which the old language was palpably suffering disorganization and decay, without exhibiting any symptoms which the most intelligent observer could, at the time, have interpreted as presaging a return to completeness and consistency. This was a Transition-era, a period of confusion, alike perplexing to those who then used the tongue, and to those who now endeavour to trace its vicissitudes. The state of chaos came to an end about the middle of the thirteenth century, a little earlier, or a little later. One of our best antiquaries sets down its close as occurring about the year 1230.\* These approximate dates give it a duration of nearly two centuries from the Conquest. It is to this

\* Sir Frederick Madden ; in his Edition of Layamon's Brut, 1847.

stage of the language that our philologists now assign the name of Semi-Saxon.

With it, in the meantime, our business lies. We shall afterwards study the second era, that period of Re-construction, during the whole of which the language may correctly be described as English.

2. Let a classical scholar imagine a case like this. In the Dark Ages of Italy, when the Latin was spoken barbarously, and the new language had not yet come into being, an ill-educated Roman monk endeavours to chronicle the calamities of the Eternal City, duly remembering those of his own convent. The etymology and syntax of a complex language, whose rules he has never studied, will fare badly in his hands. The forms of the Latin verb, for instance, will be prodigiously simplified, the personal pronouns being carefully prefixed to prevent mistakes : and, this precaution having been taken, "nos scripsi" will seem quite as good as "nos scripsimus." The troublesome government of the prepositions, too, will be escaped from, as soon as it has become the fashion to give nouns no case but one ; and "sub mons" may, perhaps, be forced to do duty both for "sub monte" and "sub montem." The genders of substantives, again, will often be used wrongly, in a language which determines these chiefly by the endings of the words. The vocabulary itself, although it will hold out longer than the grammar, cannot answer all the demands which an ill-instructed writer has to make on it. Our Roman annalist may, when he is lamenting the mischiefs wrought by Totila the Goth, recollect, for some idea he has, no fit word but one which had been let fall by the barbarian troops in their occupation of the city, and had taken root on the banks of the Tiber.

Now, although this was not in all points what happened in Italy, it was, substantially, the earliest part of the process by which the Anglo-Saxon tongue passed, through a state of ruin, into the regular English. The later parts of the Saxon Chronicle were composed exactly in the circumstances of the imaginary case ; and some of the results are close parallels to those which are there figured. The language written is nothing else than ungrammatical Anglo-Saxon, inflection and syntax being alike frequently incorrect ; and the leading solecisms are plainly such as must have been current in the time of the writers, being the rudiments of forms which soon became characteristic features in the infant English. The introduction of new words from Norman roots is rare ; but some of the instances are curious. We cannot suppose the poor monk of Peterborough, writing in the twelfth century, to have forgotten his native word for "peace." But, in registering the death of Henry the

First, he disdained to bestow, on the quiet which that able king enforced throughout England, the sacred name which suggested the idea of freedom.\*

3. The passage which will illustrate for us this state of things, is from the Saxon Chronicle. It occurs in a frightful description of the miseries inflicted on the peasantry by the nobles, during the disturbed reign of Stephen. Therefore it must have been written after that king's death; though it bears the date of 1137.†

Hí swencten<sup>1</sup> the<sup>2</sup> wreccc<sup>3</sup> men of the land<sup>4</sup> mid castel-weorces.<sup>5</sup> Thá the castles<sup>6</sup> waren<sup>7</sup> maked,<sup>8</sup> thá fylden<sup>9</sup> works. When the castles were made, then filled hí mid yvele men.<sup>10</sup> Thá namen<sup>11</sup> hí thá<sup>12</sup> men the they (them) with evil men. Then took they the men whom

<sup>1</sup> Infin. *swencan*, to vex, fatigue, labour; old English, *swink*, used by Milton. The preterite plural retains its final syllable, but not purely: it should be *swencton*. This *-en* for *-on* was one of the most permanent of the changes.

<sup>2</sup> The Undeclined article, formerly used often for the Declined, was now used almost always.

<sup>3</sup> Should be *wreccan*. The writer has lost one of the nicest distinctions of the Anglo-Saxon, that between the Definite and the Indefinite forms of the adjective (as in modern German).

<sup>4</sup> The Nominative for the Dative *lande*. The monk has forgotten the regimen of the preposition, or did not know the declension, or never thought of the matter. An old Anglo-Saxon, indeed, would have used the genitive of *land* without a preposition.

<sup>5</sup> Here the Dative plural *weorcum* is lost, and the Nominative used instead.

<sup>6</sup> A double corruption. (1.) *Castel* should have been declined in one of the neuter forms, which gives the nominative plural like the nominative singular. (2.) The masculine form which the monk attempts to follow, should have its nominative plural in *-as*. See the Extract from Alfred, Note 42. Observe, further, that the simplest of the masculine declensions of the Anglo-Saxon (which is exemplified in the note just referred to), was the one that lingered longest, and founded our English possessive and plural.

<sup>7</sup> For *wæron*. See Note 1.

<sup>8</sup> For *macod* or *gemacod*; from inf. *macian*.

<sup>9</sup> See Note 1.

<sup>10</sup> Nominative for Dative both in substantive and adjective.

<sup>11</sup> See Note 1. The word is from inf. *niman* (German, *nehmen*), still preserved in thieves' slang, and in the name of Shakspeare's Corporal Nym.

<sup>12</sup> An accusative plural, not unauthorized by older use.

\* Peace in Anglo-Saxon is *frith* (Germ. *friede*); Free is *freó* or *fríó*: but some of their derivatives seem to interchange meanings. "Peace (*pais*, Norman, the modern *paix*)," says the monk, in summing up the character of the king, "peace he made for man and beast."

† Ingram's "Saxon Chronicle, with an English Translation," 1823.



*hí wénden<sup>13</sup> thæt ani<sup>14</sup> gód hefden,<sup>15</sup> báthe<sup>16</sup> be nihtes<sup>17</sup>*  
*they thought that any goods (they) had, both by night*  
*and be dæies.<sup>18</sup> Me<sup>19</sup> henced<sup>20</sup> up bi the fét,<sup>21</sup> and*  
*and by day. (Some) men hanged (they) up by the feet, and*  
*smoked<sup>22</sup> heom mid fúl<sup>23</sup> smoke :<sup>24</sup> me dide<sup>25</sup> cnotted<sup>26</sup>*  
*smoked them with foul smoke : (some) men did (they) knotted*  
*strenges abútan here<sup>27</sup> hæved,<sup>28</sup> and wríthen<sup>29</sup> to-thæt<sup>30</sup> it<sup>31</sup>*  
*strings about their head, and twisted till it*  
*gæde<sup>32</sup> to the hærnæs.<sup>33</sup>*  
*went to the brain.*

4. Our cursory survey of the Semi-Saxon brings us now to Layamon's Metrical Chronicle, the "Brut," which belongs to the end of the twelfth century, or the beginning of the thirteenth.

The editor of the poem has subjected its language to a masterly analysis, the chief results of which are easily understood, and pro-

<sup>13</sup> See Note 1. From inf. *wénan*; *ic wéne*, I ween (old English).

<sup>14</sup> For *ánig* or *ænig*; the Terminating Consonant dropped.

<sup>15</sup> For *hæfdon*: See Note 1. Irregularities of spelling are constant in the Anglo-Saxon manuscripts of all ages.

<sup>16</sup> The original of *both* (Scottish, *baith*); but the pure Anglo-Saxon is (adjective) *bá*, *begen*, or *bátwá* (both-two).

<sup>17</sup> Meant as a Genitive of *niht*: a praiseworthy attempt at grammar. But (1.) *niht* seems to have properly *nihte* in the genitive. (2.) *Be* or *bei* should have had a dative, *nihte*. The word *nihtes*, by night (like modern German), used adverbially, would have been good Anglo-Saxon.

<sup>18</sup> For *dæges*, genitive of *dæg*; should have been the dative, *dæge*: See Note 17. Good Anglo-Saxon is *dæges*, by day.

<sup>19</sup> Very common in Semi-Saxon MSS., for *man* or *men*.

<sup>20</sup> A very instructive example of innovations. The irregular verb *hún*, to hang, has in pret. *ic heng*, *we hengen*. Our monk and his contemporaries, (1.) seem to have formed a new infinitive, such as *hengan*; (2.) they have made from it a regular preterite *henced* (more correctly *hengede*); (3.) they have then dropped the plural termination, which would have given *hengedon*. This loss of the Last Syllable in the Plurals is especially noteworthy. For it is a decided step towards English.

<sup>21</sup> Sing. *fót*; plur. *fóta*, or sometimes *fét*; see also Note 4.

<sup>22</sup> Inf. *smeccan*, *smeccian*, or *smeccan* (Scottish, *smeek*); pret. *ic smeéc*, *we smucon*. The Plural *-on* is lost; See Note 20.

<sup>23</sup> The adjective robbed of its cases; should be dat. *fálum*.

<sup>24</sup> *Smeóce*, *smece*, or *smice*, dat.

<sup>25</sup> Plural termination lost; See Note 20. For the verb, see Alfred, Note 94.

<sup>26</sup> For *cnottede*; Plural of adjective lost.

<sup>27</sup> For *hira* or *heora*; see Alfred, Note 11.

<sup>28</sup> Correctly, *heafod*. Grammar right, (perhaps by accident,) *abutan* taking an accusative, and the noun having the nominative and accusative alike.

<sup>29</sup> Inf. *wríthan* (English, *wríthe*); See Note 1.

<sup>30</sup> *To-thæt*, for *oth*, or some such word: unusual.

<sup>31</sup> Correctly, *hit*. See Alfred, Note 11. Another approach to English.

<sup>32</sup> An attempt to inflect an irregular verb regularly. For the verb, see Alfred, Note 44.

<sup>33</sup> A noun singular: perhaps not old Anglo-Saxon, (Scottish, *harns*.)

vide very valuable materials for those who study the early history of our English tongue.

We have to take account, first, of the words constituting the vocabulary; and, secondly, of the manner in which these are dealt with when they are combined in sentences.

The Vocabulary is especially instructive. Written a century and a half after the Norman Conquest, the Brut has hardly any words that are not Anglo-Saxon. Containing more than thirty-two thousand lines, it has not, in the older of its two manuscripts, so many as fifty French words, although we include in the list new words taken through that tongue from the Latin; and, of those which it has, several had been introduced earlier, being found in the Saxon Chronicle. In a more recent text, supposed to belong to the reign of Henry the Third, about thirty of the French words are retained, and upwards of forty others are added.

We have thus decisive proof of an assertion, which we found reason to believe when we reviewed the literature of the Norman period. The immediate effects of the Conquest, even on the Vocabulary of the Anglo-Saxon tongue, were by no means so considerable as they were once believed to have been.

In respect of Etymology and Syntax, again, Layamon's deviations from the Anglo-Saxon are set down for us in several articles; and of them we may take, first, those (and the proportion is surprisingly large) of which it happens that instances have occurred to us in our short extract from the Saxon Chronicle.

First: There is a general disregard of Inflections in the Substantives: and Masculine forms are given to neuters in the plural. Indeed, the inflections of the Anglo-Saxon nouns were so complex, that our grammars are not yet quite at one in describing them. Instances, which have just been noted in the Chronicle, lead us towards this very important fact; that the declension which lingered longest was the simplest of those that had been used for Masculine Substantives, a declension giving a genitive singular in *-es*, and a nominative plural in *-as*. The plural ending was, as we have seen, corrupted into *-es*; the declension, so changed, then usurped the place of the more difficult ones in a great majority of the most common words; and this was the foundation of our modern genitive in *'s*, and of our plural in *s* or *es*.

Secondly: There was a like disregard of Gender, which had in most instances been fixed by termination, according to rules both difficult and uncertain, like those which still perplex learners in the continental Gothic tongues. Not only were the names of things without life masculine, feminine, or neuter, according to

their endings; but some names of living creatures were neuter, the termination overbearing the meaning.\* Confusion was inevitable in a time when the language was neglected: and a very obvious remedy presented itself, after a while, in our modern rule of determining all genders by the signification of the words.

Thirdly: The Definite and Indefinite Declensions of Adjectives are confounded; and the Feminine terminations of adjectives and pronouns are neglected. We have seen, in the Chronicle, the inflectional terminations of the adjectives disappearing altogether; although some of these did not altogether lose their hold for many generations.†

Fourthly: there is an occasional use of the Weak preterites and participles of verbs, (the forms which our grammarians have been accustomed to call Regular,) instead of the Strong or Irregular forms.

Fifthly: There is a constant substitution of *-en* for *-on* in the Plurals of Verbs; and the final *-e* is often discarded.

Sixthly: There is great uncertainty in the Government of Prepositions.

Having already encountered all the corruptions thus enumerated, we have really few others to learn, and none that are nearly so important. A few there are, however, which throw light on the formation of the new tongue.

Besides the article *an* (still used also as a numeral, and declined), our other article *a* now appears, being used as indeclinable, and prefixed to consonants, as with us. The gender of nouns, pretty correct in the earlier text, is less so in the later; and the feminine is often neglected altogether. In respect of pronouns, the accusative *him* for *hine*, (already traceable in the Chronicle,) appears frequently in the later text; and in it, too, the relative takes the undeclined form *woche*, instead of the older *whilc* or *wulc*. The conjugation of verbs is generally that of the Anglo-Saxon, with the exceptions already noted: but it suffers also certain other changes, which lead us fast towards English. The preposition *to* is inserted before infinitives; the common infinitive termination *-an* is changed into *-en* (as likewise elsewhere the final *-a* into *-e*); the final *-n* of

\* Thus, *wif*, a woman, was neuter. The word was not promoted to the dignity of real gender till it was compounded in *wif-man* (literally, a *female-man*), whence comes *woman*.

† "All the indefinite inflections of the adjective may be found in the manuscripts of the thirteenth century; but there is much inconsistency in the manner of using them, and that sometimes even in the same manuscript. The only inflections (of the adjective) which survived long enough to affect the language of Chaucer and his contemporaries, were those of the nominative and genitive plural." Guest: in the Transactions of the Philological Society; vol. i.: 1844.

the infinitive is omitted, sometimes in the earlier manuscript, and generally in the later; and a difficult gerundive form in *-nne* or *ne*, (which has not happened to occur to us,) is indeed retained, but is confounded with the present participle in *-nde*, the original of our participle in *-ing*.

5. A few lines of the Brut, with the scantiest annotation, may suffice to exemplify these remarks, and serve, in some degree, as a ground of comparison with the older diction of the Chronicle.\*

Our extract is from the account of the great battle of Bath, in which the illustrious Arthur is said to have signally discomfited the Saxons. The semi-stanzas are separated by colons.\*

Ther weoren Sæxisce men : folken<sup>1</sup> alre<sup>2</sup> ærmest ;<sup>3</sup>  
*There were Saxon men of-folks all most-wretched ;*  
 And thá Alemainisce men : geomerest<sup>4</sup> alre leoden :<sup>5</sup>  
*And the Alemannish men saddest of-all nations.*  
 Arthur mid his sweorde : fæie-scipe<sup>6</sup> wurhte :  
*Arthur with his sword death-work wrought.*  
 Al that he smat to : hit wes sone<sup>7</sup> fordon :  
*All that he smote to, it was soon done-for.*  
 Al was the king abolgen :<sup>8</sup> swá bith<sup>9</sup> the wilde bar :  
*All was the king enraged, as is the wild boar.*  
 \* \* \* \*

Thá isæh Arthur : athelest<sup>10</sup> kingen :<sup>11</sup>  
*When saw Arthur, noblest of-kings,*  
 Whar<sup>12</sup> Colgrim at-stod : and æc-stal<sup>13</sup> wrohte :  
*Where Colgrim at-stood, and eke place worked,*  
 Thá clupede the king : kenliche lude :  
*Then called the king, keenly loud :*  
 \* \* \* \*

<sup>1</sup> For *folca* ; genitive plural, of *folc*.

<sup>2</sup> *Ealra* (sometimes *alra*) is the correct genitive plural of *eall* or *all*.

<sup>3</sup> Literally, *poorest* (German). <sup>4</sup> See Cædmon, Note 5.

<sup>5</sup> For *leoda* ; from *leod* (German, *leute*).

<sup>6</sup> Literally, *fey-ship* ; Anglo-Saxon, *fæge* ; Scottish, *fey*. See Guy Manering.

<sup>7</sup> For *sona*.

<sup>8</sup> Good Anglo-Saxon from inf. *abelgan*.

<sup>9</sup> Good Anglo-Saxon. The verb *beōn*, to be, gives, in the present, *ic beō*, *thú býst*, *he býth* ; and *wesan*, to be, gives *ic eom*, *thú eart*, *he is*.

<sup>10</sup> Superlative from the Anglo-Saxon, *æthel* or *ethel* (German, *edel*).

<sup>11</sup> The error marked in Note 1.

<sup>12</sup> Modern spelling, for *hw*.

<sup>13</sup> Hence *stall* ; perhaps here it means *fight* ; whence *stalwart*, brave.

\* Madden's Layamon, iii. 468-471 ; the text of the older manuscript. The passage, with a translation, is also in Guest's "History of English Rhythms," vol. ii. 1838.

Nú him is al swá there gat : ther he<sup>14</sup> thene hul wat :  
*Now to-him is all as to-the goat, where she the hill keeps.*

Thenne cumeth the wulf wilde : touward hire winden :<sup>15</sup>

*Then comes the wolf wild, toward her tracks :*

Theh the wulf beon<sup>16</sup> áne : búten ælc imane :<sup>17</sup>

*Though the wolf be one, without all company,*

And ther weoren in áne loken : fif hundred gaten :

*And there were in one fold five hundred goats,*

The wulf heom to iwiteth :<sup>18</sup> and alle heom abiteth :

*The wolf them to cometh, and all them biteth.*

\* \* \* \*

Ich am wulf, and he is gat : the gume<sup>19</sup> scal beon faie :<sup>20</sup>

*I am wolf, and he is goat : the man shall be fey !*

<sup>14</sup> The word *gat* is first used correctly as feminine, being joined with *there* ; and then it is held as masculine, being represented by *he*. But, possibly, *he* may be a corruption for the feminine *heó*, which seems to have sometimes taken that form in the later dialect of the west. See Transactions of the Philological Society : vol. i. p. 279 : 1844.

<sup>15</sup> A noun from *windan*, to wind or twine.

<sup>16</sup> Plural of subjunctive ; wrongly used for singular.

<sup>17</sup> From *man* ; as the Old English and Scottish word, *menye* or *meinye*, a company.

<sup>18</sup> *Witan*, to depart.

<sup>19</sup> Anglo-Saxon, *guma*.

<sup>20</sup> See Note 6.



## CHAPTER III.

## THE OLD ENGLISH PERIOD.

A. D. 1250—A. D. 1500.

## FORMATION OF THE STRUCTURE OF THE ENGLISH TONGUE.

1. Principle of the Change—Inflections deserted—Substitutes to be found—The First Step already exemplified.—2. Stages of the Re-Construction—Early English—Middle English. EARLY ENGLISH.—3. Character of the Early English—Specimens.—4. Extract from *The Owl and the Nightingale*.—5. Extract from the *Legend of Thomas Becket*. MIDDLE ENGLISH.—6. Character of Middle English—The Main Features of the Modern Tongue established—Changes in Grammar—Changes in Vocabulary—Specimens—Chaucer.—7. Extracts from Prologue to the *Canterbury Tales*.—8. Extracts from the *Knight's Tale*.—9. Specimen of Chaucer's Prose.—10. Language in the Early Part of the Fifteenth Century—Extract from *Lydgate's Churl and Bird*.—11. Language in the Latter Part of the Fifteenth Century—Its Character—The Structure of the English Tongue substantially Completed—Extract from *The Paston Letters*. THE LANGUAGE OF SCOTLAND.—12. A Gothic Dialect in North-Eastern Counties—An Anglo-Saxon Dialect in Southern Counties—Changes as in England.—13. The Scottish Tongue in the Fourteenth Century—Extract from *Barbour's Bruce*.—14. Great Changes in the Fifteenth Century—Extract from *Dunbar's Thistle and Rose*.

1. ESCAPING from the perplexities of the Semi-Saxon, we have reached an era in which the language may reasonably be called English. The principles in respect of which our modern speech deviates from its Germanic root, now begin to operate actively.

Some of the changes which have already been observed by us, suggest and illustrate these principles: others may seem to lead us away from them. The primary law is exemplified by very many of the words we have analyzed. It is this.

The Anglo-Saxon, like the Latin, though not to the same extent, was rich in inflections: a given idea being denoted by a given word, many of the modifications of that idea could be expressed by changes in the form of the word, without aid from any other words. In the course of the revolution, most of the inflections disappeared. Consequently, in expressing the modifications of an idea denoted

by a given word, the new language has oftenest to join with that word other words denoting relations.

Such a change occurs when the inflections of a Latin verb have their place supplied by auxiliary verbs, and those of the noun by prepositions. It is exemplified when the genitive "Romæ" is translated into the French "De Rome," and "Nos amavimus" into "Nous avons aimé."

The first step of it has been exemplified, again and again, in the Semi-Saxon passages which we have analyzed. If we were to try the experiment of blotting out, in our extracts, every word that has not had its inflection corrupted, we should find that very few words indeed were left. Sometimes a word has lost its inflected part, and, along with it, the idea expressed by the inflection. Many words which originally had diverse inflected terminations have all been made to end alike, the inflection thus coming to signify nothing. Perhaps, also, it may have occurred to some readers, that the verbs had suffered less alteration than the substantives and adjectives. If we have made this remark on the few words contained in our specimens, we had better not lose sight of it. It will immediately appear to be true universally.

2. We now enter on the period of Re-construction, which may be described as extending from the middle of the thirteenth century through the fourteenth and fifteenth. The language of those two hundred and fifty years may be called Old English.

It first appears in a state so equivocal, that we may be inclined to doubt whether it deserves to be called English at all. But when we leave it, at the close of this period, it has assumed a shape really different in no essential feature from the English of modern times. The critic to whom we owe our dissection of Layamon's Semi-Saxon has proposed, for the sake of convenience, to arrange this new development of the tongue in two successive stages. The first of these, reaching for a century from his approximate date of 1230, he calls Early English. He gives the name of Middle English to the speech of the period between 1330 and 1500.

It is not possible to fix on any point of time, at which the distinction between the two stages is clear on both sides. Nor, though we disregard dates, is the line between the two marked very deeply, at all its points, by internal characteristics. Yet there are evident steps of progress, which may aptly be denoted by the use of the two descriptive terms.

#### EARLY ENGLISH.

3. As our usher into the region of the Early English, we may

accept the fine poem of "The Owl and the Nightingale," already described when we were introduced to the poetry of the Norman period. It occupies a doubtful position, both in the character of its language and in respect of its date, which perhaps should not be carried forward so far as even the beginning of the fourteenth century.

Still it shows so near an approach to intelligible English, that our specimen may be risked without a full translation.

4. It will perhaps be obvious, when the extract has been read, that there is now a distinct change in order as well as in structure. There are not a few remnants of inflection, with many symptoms of its retirement, and of the accompanying abbreviations. The passage shows clearly one of the features usually insisted on as characteristic of the earliest stage of the new tongue; namely, that the Anglo-Saxon vowels *-a*, *-e*, *-u*, in final syllables, are all of them represented by *-e*. The final *-n* of the infinitive verb is beginning to disappear; and the infinitive and the noun, thus ceasing to be distinguishable by form, alike dropped also, in no long time, the final vowel. It should be observed, however, that here, when the final *-e* represents any vowel of the older language, it ought to make a syllable, and be reckoned in the accentual scanning of the line.\*

Hulë,<sup>1</sup> thu axest<sup>2</sup> me, (ho<sup>3</sup> seide),  
 Gif ich<sup>4</sup> kon<sup>5</sup> eni other dede,  
 Butë<sup>6</sup> singen in sumer tide,  
 And bringë blissë<sup>7</sup> for<sup>8</sup> and wide.  
 Wi<sup>9</sup> axestu<sup>10</sup> of craftës<sup>11</sup> mine?  
 Betere is min on<sup>12</sup> than allë thine.  
 And lyst, ich tellë the ware-vore.<sup>13</sup>  
 —Wostu<sup>14</sup> to-than<sup>15</sup> man was i-bore?<sup>16</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Owl; Anglo-Saxon, *úle*.

<sup>2</sup> Vulgar English.

<sup>3</sup> She. The word is almost pure Anglo-Saxon.

<sup>4</sup> For *ic*, I: already met with in Layamon,

<sup>5</sup> Know, from Anglo-Saxon; English, *con*.

<sup>6</sup> But; Anglo-Saxon preposition, *butan*.

<sup>7</sup> Anglo-Saxon dative; the final *-e* used as a distinct syllable.

<sup>8</sup> For; Anglo-Saxon, *feor*.

<sup>9</sup> Why; Anglo-Saxon, *hwí*.

<sup>10</sup> Askest thou; an unessential contraction.

<sup>11</sup> Crafts, arts; Anglo-Saxon, *cræft*; plur. *cræftas*.

<sup>12</sup> One.

<sup>13</sup> Wherefore.

<sup>14</sup> Wottest thou? knowest thou?

<sup>15</sup> To-what; than, a form of the dative of the article; used also in Anglo-Saxon as relative and demonstrative.

<sup>16</sup> Born; Anglo-Saxon, *geboren*, from *beran*.

\* Here, and in subsequent extracts, the vowel, both final and in the middle of words, is marked (··), when the syllable in which it occurs should be taken account of in the prosody, and is likely to be overlooked. The text of the extract is chiefly from Wright's edition, (Percy Society,) 1843.

To tharē<sup>17</sup> blisse<sup>18</sup> of hovenē-riche,<sup>19</sup>  
 Thar<sup>20</sup> ever is song and murhthe<sup>21</sup> i-liche.<sup>22</sup>

\* \* \* \*

Vor-thi<sup>23</sup> men singth<sup>24</sup> in holi chirche,  
 And clerkēs ginneth<sup>25</sup> songēs wirche;<sup>26</sup>  
 That man<sup>27</sup> i-thenchē<sup>28</sup> bi the songe,  
 Wider<sup>29</sup> he shall: and thar bon<sup>30</sup> longe,  
 That he the murhthē ne vorgete,<sup>31</sup>  
 Ac thar-of thenchē and bigete.<sup>32</sup>

\* \* \* \*

Hi<sup>33</sup> riseth up to<sup>34</sup> midel nichte,  
 And singeth of the hovenē lihte;  
 And prostēs<sup>35</sup> upē<sup>36</sup> londē<sup>37</sup> singeth,  
 Wane<sup>38</sup> the liht of daiē springeth;  
 And ich hom<sup>39</sup> helpē wat<sup>40</sup> I mai:  
 Ich singē mid<sup>41</sup> hom niht and dai!

5. The Chronicle of Robert of Gloucester, which in our literary review was referred to the close of the thirteenth century, has commonly been received, and very frequently quoted, as an indisputable specimen of Early English, and perhaps the oldest that can be assigned to a fixed date.

Instead of quoting from it, we will take our specimen from one of the pieces contained in a collection of Monkish Legends, which have plausibly been attributed to the same author, and are at all events very like his Chronicle in style. The story mixes up devotion, history, and romance, in a manner which seems to us very odd, but is quite common in our old literature.

A young London citizen, going on pilgrimage to the Holy Land, was taken prisoner by the Saracens. The daughter of his master fell in love with him; and, when he had made his escape, eloped to

<sup>17</sup> *The*; Anglo-Saxon, *there*. See Alfred, Note 15.

<sup>18</sup> The dative termination here written, but not sounded; compare Note 7.

<sup>19</sup> *Heaven-kingdom*.

<sup>20</sup> *Where*; Anglo-Saxon, *thar*, demonstrative and relative.

<sup>21</sup> *Mirth*. <sup>22</sup> *Lāke* (obscure). <sup>23</sup> *Therefore*.

<sup>24</sup> The termination *-th* in the plurals of pres. indic. is Anglo-Saxon.

<sup>25</sup> *Begin*. <sup>26</sup> *To work*. <sup>27</sup> Anglo-Saxon for *one*; French, *on*.

<sup>28</sup> *Think*; subjunctive. <sup>29</sup> *Whither*; Anglo-Saxon, *hwider*.

<sup>30</sup> *There may-be*; *beón*, Anglo-Saxon; plural of subjunctive for singular.

<sup>31</sup> *Forget*; subjunctive. <sup>32</sup> *Seek*; Anglo-Saxon, *begitan*.

<sup>33</sup> See Alfred, Note 11. <sup>34</sup> *At*.

<sup>35</sup> *Priests*; Anglo-Saxon, *preost*. <sup>36</sup> *Upon*. <sup>37</sup> *Land*.

<sup>38</sup> *When*; Anglo-Saxon, *hwænne*.

<sup>39</sup> Anglo-Saxon, *heom*; see Alfred, Note 11.

<sup>40</sup> *What*; Anglo-Saxon, *hwæt*. <sup>41</sup> See Alfred, Note 43.

follow him. With no syllable of European speech but the one word "London," she found her way from Jerusalem into England, and was found by her lover, searching for him through the street in which he lived. She was, of course, christened and married to him: and their son was the celebrated Thomas à Becket.

The following are a few of the opening lines in the Legend which celebrates the ambitious saint and martyr. The measure is the common metre of the psalms, the four lines being here written in two, and the break indicated, as before, by a colon. It will not escape notice that we now begin to encounter French words, almost always expressing ideas which had become familiar to the people through their Norman masters.\*

Gilbert was Thomas fader name: that truë was and god,  
 And lovede God and holi church: siththe<sup>1</sup> he wit understod.  
 The croicē<sup>2</sup> to the holie lond: in his yunghede<sup>3</sup> he nom,<sup>4</sup>  
 And mid on<sup>5</sup> Richard, that was his man: to Jerusálem com.  
 There hi<sup>6</sup> dude<sup>7</sup> herē<sup>8</sup> pelrynage:<sup>9</sup> in holi stedēs<sup>10</sup> faste;  
 So that among the Sarazyns: ynome<sup>11</sup> hi were atte laste,  
 Hi and other Cristene men: and in strong prisoun<sup>12</sup> ido,<sup>13</sup>  
 In meseise<sup>14</sup> and in pyne ynough: of hunger and chile also,  
 For ful other half yer:<sup>15</sup> greate pyne hi hadde and schame,  
 In the Princes hous of the lawe: Admiraud<sup>16</sup> was his name.  
 Ac Gilbert of London: best gracē<sup>17</sup> haddē there,  
 Of the Prince and allē his: among alle that ther were,  
 For oftē al in feterēs: and in other bende,<sup>18</sup>  
 The Prince he servedē atte mete: for him thochtē<sup>19</sup> hende.<sup>20</sup>

\* \* \* \*

And namelichē<sup>21</sup> thurf<sup>22</sup> a maid: that this Gilbert lovede faste,  
 The Prince's douchter Admiraud: that hire hurte<sup>23</sup> al upe<sup>24</sup>  
 him caste.

<sup>1</sup> *Since*.      <sup>2</sup> French, instead of the Anglo-Saxon, *ród*, rood.

<sup>3</sup> *Youth*. The Anglo-Saxon termination *-hed* gives our *-hood*.

<sup>4</sup> *Took*; see Saxon Chronicle, Note 11.

<sup>5</sup> *One*.

<sup>6</sup> *They*; see Alfred, Note 11.

<sup>7</sup> See Alfred, Note 94: the *u* for *y* occurs in Layamon, and is said to belong to a western dialect.

<sup>8</sup> *Their*: see Alfred, Note 11.

<sup>9</sup> *Pilgrimage*; French.

<sup>10</sup> *Places*.

<sup>11</sup> *Taken*; See Note 4.

<sup>12</sup> French; found in Layamon, second text.

<sup>13</sup> *Done*, *put*.

<sup>14</sup> *Misease*; perhaps French.

<sup>15</sup> *Other-half-year*; i. e. *a year and a half*; good modern German. A parallel Teutonism is the Scottish *half-nine o'clock*, for *half-past eight*.

<sup>16</sup> French; in Layamon, second text.

<sup>17</sup> French.

<sup>18</sup> *Bands*.

<sup>19</sup> See Alfred, Note 55.

<sup>20</sup> *Dexterous*, *handy*.

<sup>21</sup> *Especially*.

<sup>22</sup> *Through*.

<sup>23</sup> *Heart*.

<sup>24</sup> *Upon*.

\* Black's "Life and Martyrdom of Thomas Beket;" (Percy Society); 1845.



\* \* \* \*

And eschtē<sup>25</sup> him of Engēlonde : and of the manere there,  
 And of the lyf of Cristene men : and what here bileve<sup>26</sup> were.  
 The manere of Engēlonde : this Gilbert hire tolde fore,  
 And the toun het<sup>27</sup> Londone : that he was inne<sup>28</sup> ibore,<sup>29</sup>  
 And the bileve of Cristene men : this blisse withouten ende,  
 In hevene schal here medē<sup>30</sup> beo : whan hi schulle hennē<sup>31</sup> wende.<sup>32</sup>

\* \* \* \*

“ Ich wole,”<sup>33</sup> heo seidē, “ al mi lond : leve for love of the,  
 And Cristene womman become : if thu wolt spousi<sup>34</sup> me.”

#### MIDDLE ENGLISH.

6. That new stage of the language, which has been called Middle English, presents itself quite unequivocally in the latter half of the fourteenth century. It was used by Chaucer and Wycliffe : we read it at this day in passages of our noblest poetry, and in our first complete translation of the Holy Scriptures.

Thus interesting as the organ both of inventive genius and of divine truth, it is, in all essentials, so like to our own every-day speech, that there is hardly any thing except the antique spelling, (capricious and incorrect in all our old books, besides being unusual,) to prevent any tolerable English scholar from understanding readily almost every word of it. Further, it has peculiarities so well marked as to make it easily distinguishable in every particular instance, both from the forms of the tongue that are much older, and from those that are perfectly modernized. Yet our philologists are not quite agreed in their way of describing it.

The truth is this. On the one hand, this form of our language is easily understood ; because the foundations of the grammatical system which rules in Modern English had been immovably laid, and were by all good writers regularly built on. On the other hand, its exact character is not easily analyzed ; because now, more perhaps than in any preceding period, the modes of speech were rapidly undergoing transformation in minor points. There still lingered vestiges of the antique, which could not but very soon melt away. Although, of the Anglo-Saxon forms which the men of this generation inherited, many were immediately dropped, many others were

<sup>25</sup> *Asked*      <sup>26</sup> *Belief*.      <sup>27</sup> *Hight*, was called ; see Alfred, Note 18.

<sup>28</sup> *In, in it*.      <sup>29</sup> *Born*.      <sup>30</sup> *Meed*, reward.

<sup>31</sup> Anglo-Saxon, *heona*, *heonon*, hence.

<sup>32</sup> *Wend*, to go ; still in use.      <sup>33</sup> *Will*.

<sup>34</sup> Infinitive in *-i*, *-ie*, or *-y* ; found in Layamon, and held to be a token of western dialect.

still retained after they had lost their old significance: the step which still remained to be taken, was the abandoning of the forms which had thus become useless. Examples are the vowel-endings, no longer indicative of difference in gender or declension. It is observable, likewise, that writers evidently had not yet become aware, how thorough a remodelling of arrangement was called for by the new forms which the nouns had assumed.

A few specific features should be noticed. In the first place, the Anglo-Saxon rules for the Gender of Substantives having, as we have seen, been long applied with great caprice and uncertainty, the principle of fixing gender by termination was now deserted altogether. All names of things without life were, as ever afterwards, treated as neuters. The Semi-Saxon Infinitive in *-en* was sometimes retained; sometimes the final *-n* was dropped, as it soon was always; and this step was speedily followed by the dropping of the *-e*, which had then become of no use. Another change now grew common in the Plurals of the Present Indicative. These had ended in *-ath*, afterwards in *-eth* (or in *-es* in the northern Semi-Saxon, as, "We hopes"). They now passed into *-en*, though not always.\*

One other change, and that a mighty one, now affected the Vocabulary. This, as we learned long ago, was the age during which began in earnest the naturalizing of words from the French. The innovations which the terrors of the Norman lash had been powerless to enforce, were voluntarily adopted by the literary men, admiringly emulous of the wealth of expression offered by their foreign poetical models. There is only a slight introduction of French words in such books as *Piers Plowman*, appealing to national and practical interests, and expressly designed for circulation among the mass of the people. But Chaucer's poems, and Gower's, are studded all over with them: and the style of these favourite writers exercised a commanding influence ever after.

In reading a few passages from Chaucer, we must take with us one or two rules as to his versification, a matter not yet altogether clear, but much less dark than it once was. We must call to mind, once again, the doctrine, (which cannot be too anxiously insisted on,) that here, as elsewhere in our language, the safest way of scanning is by the accents, not by the number of syllables. The versification of *Christabel*, and that of the *Lay of the Last Minstrel*, are good

\* The plural form in *-th* has lately been found surviving in a peculiar dialect occupying the barony of Forth, in the Irish county of Wexford. The district was colonized by Englishmen, brought over by Strongbow in the year 1170. *Transactions of the Philological Society*, vol. iv. 1850.

modern examples: indeed they are modelled on our antique poetry. This principle we should apply boldly, remembering that we read verses constructed in an unripe dialect, and in an uncritical time. If we freely run unemphatic syllables into each other, a manly and vigorous melody will often be heard in lines which would defy all scrupulous prosody. It is also important to observe, that the emphasis was by no means fixed on certain syllables of words with the precision of modern pronunciation; that there is great vacillation in the accenting of many common words; and that the accentuation of the half-naturalized French forms is especially capricious. The prosodial value of the final *-e* is still the great point of dissension among Chaucer's critics. Sometimes it is a syllable; sometimes it is not: and contradictory rules have been proposed for distinguishing the cases. Perhaps the truth is nearly this: that generally, though not always, the *-e* has a syllabic force when it represents either an old inflexion or the mute *e* of the French; and (it has also been said) when it is an adverbial ending. Many difficult scanings will also be disposed of by this remark; that the terminating *-e* may or should be omitted in pronunciation, when the next word begins with a vowel or an *h*.\*

7. Our first Extracts are two passages occurring in the Prologue of the Tales. They are taken from the description of the Parish Priest or Parson, and that of the Squire.

A good man was ther of religioun,  
 And was a porë Persoun of a toun:  
 But riche he was of holy thought and werk.  
 He was also a lerned man, a clerk,  
 That Cristës gospel truly woldë preche:  
 His parischens<sup>1</sup> devoutly would he teche.  
 Benigne he was, and wondur diligent,  
 And in adversité ful pacient.

\* \* \* \*

Wyð was his parisch, and houses fer asondur;<sup>2</sup>  
 But he ne lafte<sup>3</sup> not<sup>4</sup> for reyn ne<sup>5</sup> thondur,

<sup>1</sup> *Parishioners*. The *u* for *e* which afterwards occurs frequently in final syllables (as *wondur* for *wonder*) is worth noting. It exemplifies those intermediate sounds of unaccented vowels, to which our language owes so many of its irregularities both in pronunciation and in spelling.

<sup>2</sup> A line requiring, for the melody, a running together of unaccented syllables.

<sup>3</sup> *Left, ceased, omitted.*

<sup>4</sup> Two negatives; Anglo-Saxon.

<sup>5</sup> Both *not* and *nor*; here *nor*.

\* Wright's "Canterbury Tales" (Percy Society): the text of which is followed in the extracts. It will be remarked that the same word is not always spelt exactly in the same way. This feature of the old manuscripts seemed worth preserving.

In sicknesse ne in meschief to visite  
 The ferrest<sup>6</sup> in his parische, moche and lite,<sup>7</sup>  
 Uppon his feet, and in his hond a staf.  
 This noble ensample unto his scheep he gaf,<sup>8</sup>  
 That first he wroughte, and after that he taughte.  
 Out of the gospel he tho<sup>9</sup> wordës caughte :  
 And this figure he addid yit thereto ;  
 That, if gold ruste, what schulde yren doo ?  
 For, if a priest be foul, on whom we truste,  
 No wondur is a lewid man<sup>10</sup> to ruste.

\* \* \* \*

To drawë folk to hevën by fairnesse,  
 By good ensample, was his busynesse :  
 But<sup>11</sup> it were eny persone obstinat,  
 What so<sup>12</sup> he were, of high or lowe estat :  
 Him wolde he snybbë<sup>13</sup> scharply for the nones.<sup>14</sup>  
 A bettrë priest I trowe ther nowher non is.  
 He waytud after no pomp ne reverence ;  
 Ne makëd him a spiced consciëce.  
 But Cristës love, and his apostles twelve,  
 He taught ; and first he folwëd it himselve !

With him<sup>1</sup> ther was his sonë, a yong squyer,  
 A lovyer, and a lusty bachelor ;  
 With lokkës crulle<sup>2</sup> as<sup>3</sup> they were layde in presse :  
 Of twenty yeer he was of age, I gesse.  
 Of his stature he was of evene lengthe,  
 And wondurly delyver,<sup>4</sup> and gret of strengthe.  
 And he hadde ben somtyme in chivachie,<sup>5</sup>  
 In Flaundres, in Artoys, and in Picardie,  
 And born him wel, as in so litel space,  
 In hope to stonden in his lady grace.  
 Embrowdid<sup>6</sup> was he, as it were a mede  
 Al ful of fresshë flourës, white and reede.<sup>7</sup>  
 Syngynge he was, or flowtinge,<sup>8</sup> al the day :  
 He was as fressh as is the moneth of May !

<sup>6</sup> *Farthest.*

<sup>7</sup> *Great and small.*

<sup>8</sup> See Note 2.

<sup>9</sup> An approach to *those*.

<sup>10</sup> A *lewd man*, i. e. a *layman* ; very common in Old English.

<sup>11</sup> *Unless.*

<sup>12</sup> The rudiments of *whatsoever*.

<sup>13</sup> *Chide* ; familiarly, *snub*.

<sup>14</sup> *For the occasion* ; common till long after Shakspeare.

<sup>1</sup> The Knight, described by the poet immediately before.

<sup>2</sup> *Curled.*

<sup>3</sup> *As if.*

<sup>4</sup> *Agile* ; a word common in the romances.

<sup>5</sup> *Knightly warfare.*

<sup>6</sup> *Embroidered.*

<sup>7</sup> *Red.*

<sup>8</sup> *Fluting.*

Schort was his goune, with sleevës long and wyde.  
 Wel cowde he sitte on hors, and fairë ryde :  
 He cowedë songës wel make and endyte,  
 Justne<sup>9</sup> and eek daunce, and wel purtray and write.<sup>10</sup>  
 Curteys he was, lowly, and servysable,  
 And carf<sup>11</sup> byforn<sup>12</sup> his fadur<sup>13</sup> at the table.

8. Our next readings are from the Knight's Tale, the Iliad of the middle-age poetry of England. Palamon and Arcite, Grecian knights, have been taken prisoners by Theseus, who, as in the Midsummer Night's Dream, is Duke of Athens. Imprisoned in a tower overlooking the palace gardens, they see and fall in love with Emilie, the sister of the Amazon queen Hippolyta. Their former friendship is now changed into jealousy and hate. Afterwards, the one escaping and the other being released, they encounter in a single combat, which is related with infinite spirit. Theseus, coming to the wood in which they had met, separates them, and proclaims a tournament, of which the lady shall be the prize. The passages describing the adornment of the lists, and the supernatural agency which presides over the strife, are among the most strikingly beautiful in English poetry. Not less admirable is the touching close. A seeming accident, caused by the gods, destroys Arcite; and he dies, after commending Palamon to the favour of his lady.

The following passages contain the description of May morning which precedes the interrupted duel, and a few verses from the last words of Arcite.

The busy larkë, messenger of daye,  
 Salueth<sup>1</sup> in hirë<sup>2</sup> song the morwe<sup>3</sup> gray ;  
 And fyry Phebus ryseth up so bright,  
 That al the orient laugheth of the light ;  
 And with his stremës dryeth in the greves<sup>4</sup>  
 The silver dropës, hongyng on the leeves.  
 And Arcite, that is in the court ryál<sup>5</sup>  
 With Theseus, his squyër principal,

<sup>9</sup> *Joust* : for *justen* ; perhaps a mis-spelling.

<sup>10</sup> He could both copy manuscripts and illuminate them with paintings.

<sup>11</sup> *Carved*.

<sup>12</sup> *Before*.

<sup>13</sup> *Father*.

<sup>1</sup> To be pronounced in only two syllables.

<sup>2</sup> Pure Anglo-Saxon; used also by Chaucer for *heora*. See Alfred, Note 11.

<sup>3</sup> *Morn*, *morrow*.

<sup>4</sup> *Groves* ; Anglo-Saxon nearly ; Chaucer has *grove* also in this passage.

<sup>5</sup> *Royal* ; one of the French words which occur almost in every line.



Is risen, and loketh<sup>6</sup> on the mery day.  
 And, for to doon<sup>7</sup> his óbservance to May,  
 Remembryng of the poynt of his desire,  
 He on his courser, stertyng as the fire,  
 Is riden into feeldës him to pleye,  
 Out of the court, were it a myle or tweye.  
 And to the grove, of which that I yow<sup>8</sup> tolde,  
 By áventure his wey he gan to holde;  
 To makë him a garland of the greves,  
 Were it of woodëwynde<sup>9</sup> or hawthorn leves.  
 And lowde he song agens the sonnë scheene:<sup>10</sup>  
 " May, with al thyn flourës and thy greene,  
 Welcome be thou, wel fairë freisschë May!"

This al and som, that Arcyte most<sup>1</sup> dye:  
 For which he sendeth after Emelye,  
 And Palamon, that was his cosyn deere.  
 Than seyð he thus, as ye schul<sup>2</sup> after heere.  
 " Naught may the woful spirit in myn herte  
 Declare a poynt of my sorwës<sup>3</sup> smerte<sup>4</sup>  
 To you, my lady, that I lovë most.  
 But I byquethe the service of my gost  
 To you aboven every créature;  
 Syn<sup>5</sup> that my lyf may no lenger dure.<sup>6</sup>  
 Allas, the woo!<sup>7</sup> Allas, the peynës stronge,  
 That I for you have suffred, and so longe!  
 Allas, the deth! Allas, myn Emelye!  
 Allas, departing<sup>8</sup> of our companye!  
 Allas, myn hertës queen! Allas, my wyf!  
 Myn hertës lady, ender of my lyf!  
 What is this world? What asken men to have?  
 Now with his love, now in his coldë grave  
 Allone, withouten eny companye.  
 Farwel, my swete! farwel, myn Emelye!

\* \* \* \*

<sup>6</sup> *Looketh*; Anglo-Saxon, *locath*.

<sup>7</sup> *Do*; from the Anglo-Saxon *dón*. See Alfred, Note 94.

<sup>8</sup> See Alfred, Note 7.

<sup>9</sup> *Woodbine*; Anglo-Saxon, *wudu-bind*.

<sup>10</sup> *Bright, beautiful*; very common in Old English; Anglo-Saxon, *sciene*; German, *schön*, beautiful; related to the English *shine*.

<sup>1</sup> *Must*.

<sup>2</sup> *Shall*; see Alfred, Note 2.

<sup>3</sup> *Sorrow's*.

<sup>4</sup> A halting line? <sup>5</sup> *Since*.

<sup>6</sup> See Note 4.

<sup>7</sup> *Woe*.

<sup>8</sup> *Parting* or *disparting*.

Forget not Palamon, that gentil man!"  
 And with that word his spechë failë gan:<sup>9</sup>  
 For fro<sup>10</sup> his herte up to his brest was come  
 The cold of deth, that him had overcome.  
 And yet moreover in his armës twoo  
 The vital strength is lost, and al agoo.<sup>11</sup>  
 Only the intellect, withouten more,  
 That dwellëd in his hertë sik and sore,  
 Gan faylë, when the hertë feltë deth.  
 Duskëd his eyghen<sup>12</sup> two, and faylëd breth.  
 But on his lady yit he cast his ye:<sup>13</sup>  
 His lastë word was, "Mercy, Emelye!"

9. Of the Prose of the fourteenth century, a very short specimen will suffice. It, too, will be furnished by the *Canterbury Tales*. It is the beginning of the *Tale of Melibeus*, describing the injury which the principal character in the narrative was tempted to avenge.

"A yong man called Melibeus, mighty and riche, and his wif that called was Prudens, had a doughter which that called was Sophie. Upon a day byfel, that for his desport he is went into the feldes him to play. His wif, and his doughter eek, hath he laft within his hous. Thre of his olde foos<sup>1</sup> han<sup>2</sup> it espyed, and setten laddres to the walles of his hous; and by the wyndowes ben entred, and betyn<sup>3</sup> his wif, and woundid his doughter with fyve mortal woundes, in fyve sondry places; that is to sayn, in here feet, in here hondes, in here eeres, in here nose, and in here mouth; and lafte her for deed, and went away.

"Whan Melibeus retourned was into his hous, and seigh<sup>4</sup> al this meschief, he, lik a man mad, rendyng his clothes, gan wepe and crie. Prudens his wyf, as ferforth as<sup>5</sup> sche dorste, bysought him of his wepyng to stynte. But not forthi<sup>6</sup> he gan to crie ever lenger the more.

\*

\*

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\*

"This noble wif Prudens suffred hir housbonde for to<sup>7</sup> wepe and crie, as for a certeyn space; and, whan she seigh hir tyme, sche sayd him in this wise: 'Allas, my lord!' quod sche, 'why make ye youre self for to be lik a fool? Forsothe it apperteyneth not to a wys man, tō make such sorwe.'"

<sup>9</sup> *Began.*<sup>10</sup> *From.*<sup>11</sup> *Gone*<sup>12</sup> *Eyes*; Anglo-Saxon, sing. *eage*; plur. *cagan*.<sup>13</sup> *Eye.*<sup>1</sup> *Foes.*<sup>2</sup> *Have.*<sup>3</sup> *Beat.*<sup>4</sup> *Saw.*<sup>5</sup> *So far forth as*; a phrase retained in the language, though unusual.<sup>6</sup> *Not therefore, nevertheless.*<sup>7</sup> *For to*, before infinitive: long retained; still used vulgarly.

10. The poet Lydgate may represent for us the language written in the first half of the fifteenth century. Yet, admiringly studious of Chaucer, he is in style a little more antique than he should be.

His story of "The Churl and the Bird" is imitated (he himself says, rather too modestly, that it is translated) from a favourite French fabliau. It is a moral apologue. A churl or peasant catches a bird, which speaks to him, and implores freedom, promising him, in return, three golden precepts of wisdom. Released accordingly, she flies to her tree, and thence delivers the three lessons: first, that he should not be easy of belief in idle tales; secondly, that he should never desire things impossible; thirdly, that he should never grieve immoderately for that which is irrecoverably lost. Then, singing and rejoicing, the bird taunts the man. She tells him that, in letting her escape, he had lost wealth which might have ransomed a mighty king; for that there is in her body a magical stone, weighing an ounce, which makes its possessor to be always victorious, rich, and beloved. The churl laments loudly. The bird, on this, reminds him of the three precepts, and says he has already disobeyed them all. In the first place, he had believed her story about the precious stone, which he might have known to be a downright fib, if he had had wit enough to recollect, that she had described it as weighing an ounce, which was evidently more than the weight of her whole body. It is plain how he had broken the second and third rules, although the stone had really existed. Nor need we follow the poet in his anxious deduction of the moral: it consists in the three lessons themselves.

The following stanzas are somewhat lame in prosody, as is usual with Lydgate. They describe the garden, and the bird singing in it.\*

Allë the aleis<sup>1</sup> were made playne with sond,<sup>2</sup>  
 The benches turnëd with newe turvis<sup>3</sup> grene;  
 Sote<sup>4</sup> herbers,<sup>5</sup> withe condite<sup>6</sup> at the honde,  
 That wellid up agayne the sonnë shene,  
 Lyke silver streemes as any cristalle clene:  
 The burbly<sup>7</sup> wawës<sup>8</sup> in up boyling,  
 Rounde as byralle<sup>9</sup> ther beamys out shynynge.

<sup>1</sup> *Alleys.*

<sup>2</sup> *Sand*; *o* for *a*; very common.

<sup>3</sup> *Turfs, turves.*

<sup>4</sup> *Sweet*; *sote* or *soote* usually printed in Chaucer.

<sup>5</sup> *Arbours.*

<sup>6</sup> *Conduit*; *fountain.*

<sup>7</sup> *Modern, gurgling.*

<sup>8</sup> *Waves.*

<sup>9</sup> *Beryl.*

\* Text from Halliwell's "Minor Poems of Dan John Lydgate;" (Percy Society;) 1840.

Amyddis the gardeyn stode a fressh lawrer :<sup>10</sup>  
 Theron a bird, syngyng bothe day and nyghte,  
 With shynnyng fedres brightar than the golde weere ;<sup>11</sup>  
 Whiche with hir song made hevy hertës lighte :  
 That to beholde it was an heavenly sighte,  
 How, toward evyn and in the dawning,  
 She ded her payne most amourously to synge.

Esperus<sup>12</sup> enforcëd hir coräge,  
 Toward evyn, whan Phebus gan to west,  
 And the braunches to hir ávauntage,<sup>13</sup>  
 To syng hir complyn<sup>14</sup> and than go to rest :  
 And at the rysing of the quene Alcest,<sup>15</sup>  
 To synge agayne, as was hir due,  
 Erly on morowe the day-sterre<sup>16</sup> to salue.<sup>17</sup>

It was a verray heavenly melodye,  
 Evyne and morowe to here the byrddis song,  
 And the sootë sugrëd armonye,  
 Of uncouth<sup>18</sup> varblys<sup>19</sup> and tunys drawn on longe,  
 That al the gardeyne of the noysë rong :  
 Til on a morwe, whan Tytan<sup>20</sup> shone ful clere,  
 The birdd was trapped and kaute<sup>21</sup> with a pantére.<sup>22</sup>

11. The manner in which English was written during the latter half of the fifteenth century has been examined by a very skilful analyst ; and his account of it we may profitably adopt, although it involves a little anticipation of the period which our literary history will next take up.

"In following the line of our writers, both in verse and prose, we find the old obsolete English to have gone out of use about the accession of Edward the Fourth. Lydgate and Bishop Peacock, especially the latter, are not easily understood by a reader not habituated to their language : he requires a glossary, or must help himself out by conjecture. In the Paston Letters, on the contrary, in Harding the metrical chronicler, or in Sir John Fortescue's discourse on the difference between an absolute and a limited monarchy, he finds scarce any difficulty : antiquated words and forms of

<sup>10</sup> *Laurel* ; French.<sup>11</sup> *Wire*.<sup>12</sup> *Hesperus*, the evening star.<sup>13</sup> An obscure line.<sup>14</sup> *Even-song* ; the last or completing church-office of the day.<sup>15</sup> *Alcestis* ; doubtful mythology.<sup>16</sup> *Star*.<sup>17</sup> *Salute* ; see Chaucer.<sup>18</sup> *Unknown, unusual, strange*.<sup>19</sup> *Warbles, warblings*.<sup>20</sup> *Titan*, the sun.<sup>21</sup> *Caught*.<sup>22</sup> *Trap*.

termination frequently occur; but he is hardly sensible that he reads these books much less fluently than those of modern times. These were written about 1470.

"But in Sir Thomas More's History of Edward the Fifth, written about 1509, or in the beautiful ballad of The Nut-brown Maid, which we cannot place very far from the year 1500, there is not only a diminution of obsolete phraseology, but a certain modern turn and structure, both in the verse and prose, which denotes the commencement of a new era, and the establishment of new rules of taste in polite literature. Every one will understand, that a broad line cannot be traced for the beginning of this change. Hawes, though his English is very different from that of Lydgate, seems to have had a great veneration for him, and has imitated the manner of that school to which, in a marshalling of our poets, he unquestionably belongs. Skelton, on the contrary, though ready enough to coin words, has comparatively few that are obsolete."\*

From the part of the fifteenth century whose language has thus been described, we may be content with one short specimen of familiar Prose. It is taken from a curious collection of Letters and other papers, relating to the affairs of a family in Norfolk during the latter half of the century. Our extract is from a letter of the year 1459, in which the writer speaks of the studies of his brother. The old spelling is discarded in our copy; that the modern cast of phrase and arrangement may the more readily be perceived.†

"Worshipful Sir, and my full special good master, after humble recommendation, please it you to understand, that such service as I can do to your pleasure, as to mine understanding, I have showed my diligence now this short season since your departing. \* \* Item, Sir, I may say to you, that William hath gone to school, to a Lombard called Karoll Giles, to learn and to be read in poetry, or else in French. For he hath been with the same Karoll every day two times or three, and hath bought divers books of him; for the which, as I suppose, he hath put himself in danger‡ to the same Karoll. I made a motion to William to have known part of his business: and he answered and said, that he would be as glad and as fain of a good book of French or of poetry, as my master Sir John Fastolf would be to purchase a fair manor: and thereby I understand he list not to be communed withal in such matters."

\* Hallam: Introduction to the Literature of Europe.

† The Paston Letters: Knight's edition.

‡ *In danger*, i. e. *in debt*; so used by Shakspeare, and later.



## THE LANGUAGE OF SCOTLAND.

12. The history of the transformations suffered by the Anglo-Saxon tongue is not complete, till we have marked its fate in Scotland.

How a language substantially the same with that of the English Teutons came to be currently spoken in the Scottish Lowlands to the north of the Frith of Forth, is one of those questions in our national annals, to which no answer has been made that is in any view satisfactory. If the old historians have reported to us every thing that really happened, the Anglo-Saxon settlements did not extend into those provinces, or a very little way, if at all.

The difficulty is greatest, if we believe that the Picts, who are named as their early inhabitants, were a Celtic race. But it is not by any means removed by the theory, which has been made very probable, that our Pictish ancestors were really Goths. If they were so, they must have been separated from the main stock at a period so far distant, that it could not but have been difficult for their language to pass into any of the Gothic dialects that were transported from the continent in the fifth century. One is tempted, therefore, to regard with some favour the opinion, that the Danes or other Northmen, especially the Norwegians, were the planters of a Gothic speech in the north. If their piratical expeditions are the only facts to be founded on, the solution is plainly insufficient. Such incursions, though leaving a stray colony here and there, could not well have changed the language of a whole people. Lately, however, the clue to the labyrinth has ingeniously been sought in the curious fact, already known but overlooked, that, for thirty years in the eleventh century, a Norwegian kingdom was actually and regularly maintained in the East of Scotland. The Norse population which may be conjectured to have then been introduced, is alleged to have been, with the occasional infusions of the same blood, the kernel of the race now inhabiting the eastern counties northward of the Lothians: and the further assimilation to the Germans of the south, in language as well as customs, is attributed to the annexation of all these counties to the Scottish crown. Here, again, our groundwork of facts is scanty. Nor should it be overlooked, that, although the North-Eastern dialects of Scotland exhibit many Norse words in their vocabulary, the grammar of all of them is as decidedly Anglo-Saxon as that of Yorkshire or Norfolk. This fact has greater importance than we might at first suppose; since the Scandinavian tongues have gram-

matical peculiarities, distinguishing them clearly from all those of the Teutonic stock.

As to the Lothians and other Scottish provinces lying southward of the Forth, no doubt arises. We have learned that they were covered by Anglo-Saxon emigrants; and the descendants of these invaders gradually spread themselves towards the west. It was only in consequence of political occurrences, and not till a considerable time after the invasions, that they were separated from the more southerly Teutonic communities. Further, in the twelfth century and later, the Scottish kings cherished the Saxon institutions and habits with constant eagerness.

The speech of these South-Eastern counties, which became that of Scottish literature, was, in its earliest periods, just one of the Anglian or Northumbrian varieties of the Anglo-Saxon. It preserved its original character, and underwent changes closely resembling those which took place in England; and this fact, by the way, is in itself enough to overthrow the old supposition, that the Norman Conquest was the cause which destroyed the Anglo-Saxon tongue; since the Normans in the Scottish kingdom were always very few, chiefly malcontent barons from the south. In the fourteenth century, when the language of Scotland began to be freely used in metrical composition, it was not at all further distant from the standard English of the time, than were other English dialects which, like the Scottish, were frequently applied to literary uses.

13. Barbour, contemporary with Chaucer, has already been described as having really written in purer English than that which was used in the *Canterbury Tales*. The Scottish poet's dialect has its closest parallel (and the resemblance is often striking) in the more homely and popular diction of *Piers Plowman*. The provincial spelling is a mere accident, which must not be allowed to mislead us.

We may take, from "*The Bruce*," the animated panegyric on freedom, often though it has been quoted elsewhere.\*

A! fredome is a noble thing!  
 Fredome mayss<sup>1</sup> man to haiff<sup>2</sup> liking:  
 Fredome all solace to man giffis:<sup>3</sup>  
 He levys<sup>4</sup> at ess,<sup>5</sup> that frely levys!

<sup>1</sup> *Makes.*

<sup>2</sup> *Have.*

<sup>3</sup> *Gives*; Anglo-Saxon, *gifan*.

<sup>4</sup> *Lives*; Anglo-Saxon, *libban*; Danish, *leven*; German, *leben*.

<sup>5</sup> *Ease.*

A noble hart may haiff nane<sup>6</sup> ess,  
 Na<sup>7</sup> ellys<sup>8</sup> nocht<sup>9</sup> that may him pless,<sup>10</sup>  
 Gyff fredome failyhe :<sup>11</sup> for fre liking  
 Is yharnyt<sup>12</sup> our<sup>13</sup> all othir thing.  
 Na he, that ay hass levyt fre,  
 May nocht knaw weill the propyrté,  
 The angyr, na the wrechyt dome,<sup>14</sup>  
 That is cowplyt<sup>15</sup> to foule thyrlidome.<sup>16</sup>  
 Bot<sup>17</sup> gyff he had assayit it,  
 Than all perquer<sup>18</sup> he suld<sup>19</sup> it wyt,<sup>20</sup>  
 And suld think fredome mar to pryss,<sup>21</sup>  
 Than all the gold in warld that is.  
 Thus contrar thingis evir mar,  
 Discoweryngis off the tothir ar.  
 And he that thryll<sup>22</sup> is, has nocht his :  
 All that he hass embandownyt<sup>23</sup> is  
 Till<sup>24</sup> hys lord, quhat<sup>25</sup> evir he be.  
 Yheyt<sup>26</sup> hass he nocht sa mekill<sup>27</sup> fre  
 As fre wyll to leyve,<sup>28</sup> or do  
 That at<sup>29</sup> hys hart hym drawis to.

14. The close likeness of the two Tongues did not last very long after the War of Independence. Before the end of the fifteenth century, the literary language of Scotland, although it continued to be called English by those who wrote in it, differed widely from that of England, although not so far as to make it difficult of comprehension to an Englishman familiar with Chaucer.

The deviation is quite established in the poems of Dunbar, and is made more palpable by the pedantic Latinisms which, as we have

<sup>6</sup> The *a* for *o*, so frequent in the Scottish dialect, is Anglo-Saxon, and, as we have seen, lingered long in the English.

<sup>7</sup> *Nor.*      <sup>8</sup> *Else.*      <sup>9</sup> *Not* and *nought.* See Chaucer's prose.

<sup>10</sup> *Please.*      <sup>11</sup> *Fail.*

<sup>12</sup> *Yearned, longed for* : Anglo-Saxon, *geornian*, to desire.

<sup>13</sup> *Over, above.*      <sup>14</sup> *Doom.*      <sup>15</sup> *Coupled.*

<sup>16</sup> *Thralldom* ; Anglo-Saxon, *thrael* ; *thirlian*, to pierce, drill.      <sup>17</sup> *But.*

<sup>18</sup> *Perfectly* : Scottish ; said to be *per-quair*, by book : *quair* is used by Chaucer, and gives our *quire* (of paper).

<sup>19</sup> *S-* for *sch-* or *sh-*, an Anglian peculiarity.      <sup>20</sup> *Know.*      <sup>21</sup> *Prize.*

<sup>22</sup> See Note 16.      <sup>23</sup> *Abandoned* ; nearly French.

<sup>24</sup> *To* ; modern Scottish. It is really good Anglo-Saxon, though less common than *to*.

<sup>25</sup> In Old Scottish spelling (and in Mæso-Gothic) *quh-* answers to the Anglo-Saxon *hw-*, and the English *wh-*.

<sup>26</sup> *Yet?*      <sup>27</sup> Scottish ; *much* ; from the Anglo-Saxon adjective *mycel*, *mycle*, great ; comparative, *mære* ; superlative, *mæst*.

<sup>28</sup> *Live.*      <sup>29</sup> *At*, relative, Scottish for *that*.

learned, now infected all the Scottish poetry, coalescing very badly with the native Teutonic diction. The striking personifications in his masterpiece, "The Daunce," are for several reasons unsuitable as specimens. We are partly indemnified by the opening of the very beautiful poem, "The Thistle and the Rose," which commemorates, in the allegorical manner of similar poems by Chaucer and his French masters, the marriage of James the Fourth with the Princess Margaret of England, celebrated in the year 1503.\*

Quhen Merch wes with variand<sup>1</sup> windis past,  
 And Appryll had, with hir silver schouris,  
 Tane leif at<sup>2</sup> Nature with ane<sup>3</sup> orient blast,  
 And lusty<sup>4</sup> May, that mudder<sup>5</sup> is of flouris,  
 Had maid the birdis to begyn thair houris<sup>6</sup>  
 Amang the tendir odouris reid<sup>7</sup> and quhyt,  
 Quhois armony to heir it wes<sup>8</sup> delyt ;

In bed at morrow, sleiping as I lay,  
 Me thocht Aurora, with hir cristall ene,<sup>9</sup>  
 In at the window lukit<sup>10</sup> by the day,  
 And halsit<sup>11</sup> me, with visage pail and grene :  
 On quhois hand a lark sang fro the splene :<sup>12</sup>  
 "Awalk,<sup>13</sup> luvaris,<sup>14</sup> out of your slomering !<sup>15</sup>  
 Sé how the lusty morrow dois up spring !"

Me thocht fresche May befor my bed up stude,  
 In weid depaynt of mony diverss hew ;  
 Sobir, benyng, and full of mansuetude ;  
 In brycht attair of flouris forgit<sup>16</sup> new,  
 Hevinly of colour, quhyt, reid, broun, and blew,—  
 Balmit<sup>17</sup> in dew, and gilt with Phebus bemys ;  
 Quhyll<sup>18</sup> all the house illumynit of hir lemys.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Varying* ; the Anglo-Saxon present participle in *-nde* ; to be found in Chaucer.      <sup>2</sup> *Leave of*.      <sup>3</sup> *An* ; Anglo-Saxon and Scottish.

<sup>4</sup> From Anglo-Saxon and Old English, *lust*, pleasure, desire.

<sup>5</sup> *Mother* ; Anglo-Saxon, *moder*, *modor*, *modur*.

<sup>6</sup> i. e. *Their prayers* ; "horæ," an ecclesiastical phrase.

<sup>7</sup> *Red* ; see Chaucer.

<sup>8</sup> *Was* ; Anglo-Saxon, *wæs*.

<sup>9</sup> See Chaucer's Death of Arcite, Note 12.

<sup>10</sup> *Looked*.

<sup>11</sup> Literally, *embraced* (from *hals*, neck) ; thence *saluted*.

<sup>12</sup> *From the spleen, from the heart*.

<sup>13</sup> *Awake*.

<sup>14</sup> *Lovers* ; Anglo-Saxon, *lufian*, to love.

<sup>15</sup> *Slumbering*.

<sup>16</sup> *Forged, fashioned*.

<sup>17</sup> *Embalmed*.

<sup>18</sup> *While, until*.

<sup>19</sup> *Gleams, beams* ; Anglo-Saxon, *leoma*, a beam or ray of light ; *leoman*, to shine or gleam.

\* Text from Laing's "Poems of William Dunbar ;" 1834.

"Slugird!" scho<sup>20</sup> said, "Awalk annone<sup>21</sup> for schame,  
 And in my honour sum thing thow go wryt:  
 The lark hes done the mirry day proclame,  
 To raise up luvaris with confort and delyt:  
 Yit nocht inressis thy curage<sup>22</sup> to indyt;  
 Quhois hairt sum tyme hes glaid<sup>23</sup> and blisfull bene,  
 Sangis to mak undir the levis grene!"

<sup>20</sup> *She*; common in England in the fourteenth century.

<sup>21</sup> *Anon.*      <sup>22</sup> *Courage*: but meaning, as in Lydgate, and often elsewhere, *desire*.

<sup>23</sup> *Glad*.



## CHAPTER IV.

THE SOURCES OF THE MODERN ENGLISH TONGUE;  
AND THEIR COMPARATIVE IMPORTANCE.

1. Two Points—The Grammar—The Vocabulary—Doctrine as to each.—GRAMMAR. 2. English Grammar in Substance Anglo-Saxon—Enumeration of Particulars.—3. General Doctrine—Our Deviations in Verbs few—The chief of them—Our Deviations in Nouns and their Allies many—Description of them—Consequences.—4. Position of Modern English among European Tongues—Leading Facts common to the History of all—Comparison of the Gothic Tongues with the Classical—Comparison of the English Tongue with both.—VOCABULARY. 5. Glossarial Elements to be Weighed not Numbered—The Principal Words of the English Tongue Anglo-Saxon—Seven Classes of Words from Saxon Roots.—6. Words from Latin Roots—Periods of Introduction—Kinds—Uses.—7. Words from French Roots—Periods of Introduction—Kinds and Uses.—8. Words from Greek Roots.—9. Words from Tongues yielding few.—10. Estimate, by Number, of Saxon Words Lost—Remarks.—11. Estimate of the Number of Saxon Words Retained—Proportion as tested by the Dictionaries—Proportion as tested by Specimens from Popular Writers.

1. OUR hasty survey of the Origin and Progress of the English Language has now been carried down to the beginning of the sixteenth century.

Its organization may be held to have been by that time complete. The laws determining the changes to be made on words, and regulating the grammatical structure of sentences, had been definitively fixed and were generally obeyed: all that had still to be gained in this particular was an increase of ease and dexterity in the application of the rules. The vocabulary, doubtless, was not so far advanced. It was receiving constant accessions; and the three-and-a-half centuries that have since elapsed have increased our stock of words immensely. But this is a process which is still going on, and which never comes to a stop in the speech of any people: and, the grammar being once thoroughly founded, the effects of glossarial changes are only secondary, until the time arrives when they co-operate with other causes in breaking up a language altogether.

In brief, all the alterations which our tongue has suffered, since the end of the middle ages, may be regarded as nothing more than changes and developments of Style; that is, as varieties in the manner in which individuals express their meaning, all of them using the same language.

Here, therefore, we may endeavour to sum up our results.

We have no time to spare for eulogies on the English Language. It is not only the object of affection to all of us, for the love we bear to our homes and our native land, and for the boundless wealth of pleasant associations awakened by its familiar sounds. It is worthy, by its remarkable combination of strength, precision, and copiousness, of being, as it already is, spoken by many millions, and these the part of the human race that appear likely to control, more than any others, the future destinies of the world. It may also be remarked, that the very nature of our tongue, the position it occupies between the Teutonic languages and those of Roman origin, fits it especially for the mighty functions which press more and more upon it.\*

Again, it is not our part to determine, with the accuracy of philosophical grammar, the character of our language, or the principles which dictate its laws.

Our investigation is strictly Historical: and it will be closed when we have obtained a general view of the relations which the Modern English bears to those other tongues, from which it derives its laws and its materials.

The leading doctrines may be asserted in two or three sentences.

First, our Grammar, the system of laws constituting our Etymology and Syntax, is Anglo-Saxon in all its distinctive characteristics.

Secondly, our Dictionary, though we take it in its latest and fullest state, derives a very large proportion of its words from the Anglo-Saxon. The only other tongues to which it owes much are those of the Classical stock: the French and Latin furnishing a very great number of words; and the Greek giving to our ordinary speech hardly any thing directly, though much through the Latin.

These two points, the Grammatical and the Glossarial character of the English language, will now successively be glanced at.

#### THE GRAMMAR OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE.

2. In regard to our Grammar, so many facts have gathered about

\* "It is calculated that, before the lapse of the present century, a time that so many now alive will live to witness, English will be the native and vernacular language of about one hundred and fifty millions of human beings." Watts: in Latham's "English Language;" Ed. 1850.

us in the course of our historical inquiry, that little is now left to be done except the generalizing of particulars.

“ Our chief peculiarities of structure and of idiom are essentially Anglo-Saxon; while almost all the classes of words, which it is the office of grammar to investigate, are derived from that language. Thus, the few inflections we have are all Anglo-Saxon. The English genitive, the general modes of forming the plural of nouns, and the terminations by which we express the comparative and superlative of adjectives; (-er and -est;) the inflections of the pronouns; those of the second and third persons, present and imperfect, of the verbs; the inflections of the preterites and participles of the verbs, whether regular or irregular; and the most frequent termination of our adverbs (ly): are all Anglo-Saxon. The nouns, too, derived from Latin and Greek, receive the Anglo-Saxon terminations of the genitive and plural; while the preterites and participles of verbs derived from the same sources, take the Anglo-Saxon inflections. As to the parts of speech, those which occur most frequently, and are individually of most importance, are almost wholly Saxon. Such are our articles and definitives generally, as ‘a, an, the, this, that, these, those, many, few, some, one, none;’ the adjectives whose comparatives and superlatives are irregularly formed; the separate words ‘more’ and ‘most,’ by which we express comparison as often as by distinct terminations; all our pronouns, personal, possessive, relative, and interrogative; nearly every one of our so-called irregular verbs, including all the auxiliaries, ‘have, be, shall, will, may, can, must,’ by which we express the force of the principal varieties of mood and tense; all the adverbs most frequently employed; and the prepositions and conjunctions almost without exception.”\*

3. The valuable enumeration which we have thus received, admits of being reduced to a very short formula. In no point of importance is the Grammar of the English Language any thing more than a simplification of the Grammar of the Anglo-Saxon.

Our Etymology is simpler than that of our mother-tongue, in proportion to the extent to which we have carried our abandonment of its inflections. We have stripped our words to the bones, leaving little more than their root-forms, and making ourselves dependent on auxiliary words for denoting their relations. This process indeed has gone so far, as to make our Syntax nearly a nonentity.

But here, again, a distinction should be taken. We have not dropped the inflections alike in all classes of words. The inflected

\* Edinburgh Review; Vol. LXX; 1839.

words were, the verbs on the one hand, the nouns, pronouns, and articles on the other. On the former we have made comparatively little change: the latter we have metamorphosed almost completely.

In respect of our Verbs, then, we are still in substance Anglo-Saxon. The alterations we have made, so far as worth notice, are these. On the one hand, we have, it is true, retained the -st and -th of the second and third persons singular in the present, and the -st of the second person in the preterite; but the -th is nearly displaced by the -s or -es of the Northumbrian Saxon, and the second person singular by the second plural. On the other hand, in the way of abandoning old forms entirely, we have made changes of which three only here require notice. One of these seems to have been harmless; namely, the dropping of a difficult gerundive form, importing obligation. The two other changes have been seriously hurtful. First, the verb *Weorthan*, "to become," did the work of an auxiliary to the passive voice, much as the German, *Werden*. With the passive participle, it made a proper present tense; *Beon*, or *Wesan*, *To be*, taking its place in the perfect and past. Thus, "*Domus ædificatur*," "*Domus ædificata est*," and "*Domus ædificata fuit*," had each its ready and idiomatic version. The useful verb *Weorthan* was preserved in Scotland till the sixteenth century, or longer. But in England it vanished much earlier; and we have not yet been ingenious enough to discover any efficient substitute for it. We shall, indeed, seldom if ever be misunderstood, if we are content to say, in a passive sense, "the house is building:" and a genuine ancient prefix gives us a phrase quite unequivocal, in "the house is a-building." But those forms have not found favour in the eyes of our most authoritative grammarians: and punctiliously correct speakers insist on using a cumbersome circumlocution, or compounding an awkward and novel auxiliary.\* Secondly, the Anglo-Saxon had past tenses for the verbs *Mot* and *Sceal*, now represented by the defective auxiliaries *Must* and *Ought*. Our loss of these preterites forces us, when we wish to express past obligation by these words, to adopt the expedient of throwing the main verb into the past. We interpret such phrases correctly by common consent: but they really misrepresent the relations of the two verbs in point of time. "He ought to have written" is a false translation of "*Debuit scribere*;" although,

\* *Weorthan* is used both by Barbour and Gawain Douglas. The uncouth "is being" is not quite of yesterday: it is introduced, with a sneer, in Horace Walpole's Correspondence.



if we are to use this auxiliary, it is the only translation that our language enables us to give.

The only noticeable form which we have added to our hereditary verbs is this. Our ancestors long ago became dissatisfied with the Saxon manner (certainly a rude one) of denoting futurity. It was usually attempted by the tense which we call the present, but which our Anglo-Saxon grammars correctly regard as an indefinite. Precision was sought by new applications of the auxiliaries *Sceal* and *Wille*, properly expressive of obligation and resolution: and these grew up into our *Shall* and *Will*, the shibboleth which betrays Irishmen and Scotsmen. The modern distinctions between them not only were unknown to the countrymen of Alfred, but are at variance with the applications of similar words now made both in the Gothic tongues and in the French and Italian: and none of our etymologists has yet been able to reconcile them under any one consistent principle.

Now, however, we must consider the Nouns, (substantive and adjective,) and the words allied to them. Here our innovations have been prodigious: we have, in fact, revolutionized the whole system. Except for the pronouns, the only inflections we have retained are two. We have, in substantives, the plural forms, which, as has been seen, are corruptions from one of several Anglo-Saxon declensions. We have also the genitive or possessive: but this case itself, partly superseded by the preposition from the earliest stages of English, has had its application restricted still further by modern usage. Though we may say "man's" and "men's," we now use, by far oftenest, the compound forms "of man" and "of men:" and, in very many instances, we cannot do otherwise without introducing awkwardness or confusion. In adjectives, again, as the extracts have shown, we not only lost very early the fine distinction between definites and indefinites, but made the words totally indeclinable. Further, we have dropped all the various and convenient inflections of the articles.

These innovations on the nouns and their allies affect the structure of every sentence we utter. They involve these two serious consequences. Modern English words admit very little Inversion (whence mainly comes the bareness of our Syntax): they have a great and troublesome inaptitude of Composition.

The effect of these two philological infirmities will be better understood, if we take advantage of the position we have reached, for comparing, in the leading points, the history of our own language with that of others which are now spoken abroad.

4. We have to learn, in the first place, a doctrine maintained by



all our most philosophical philologers; a doctrine which they do not seek to apply to language in its primitive stage, but which seems to hold in regard to all Tongues after they have undergone considerable development. All such tongues appear, successively, in two very dissimilar forms. In the first of these, which is the more complex, they are highly inflectional: and, in the second, they gradually become less so. The discarding of inflections, and the introduction of the new modes of expression which it makes necessary, are steps which take place in the history of all living tongues.

What the circumstances are that enforce or encourage the metamorphosis, is a question which no one has convincingly answered. In particular, it remains open for scrutiny in our own national history: in these elementary inquiries we have made no attempt to speculate on it. But we have silently discarded the old notion, according to which the English language was regarded as the fruit of a compromise between the Saxons and the Normans; as being originally, in fact, a kind of mongrel gibberish, like the *lingua franca* which, in the times of the crusades, passed to and fro between the Europeans and the Saracens. Yet there does seem to be some reason for doubting whether our philological antiquaries do not at present go too far, when they assert that, on our grammar, the Norman French had no influence whatever.

Secondly: It is to be noted, that every one of the Modern European Languages has been formed chiefly by this very method, of dropping inflections and finding substitutes. This is, especially, the characteristic change which has transformed the Latin into the Italian, French, and Spanish. It is in the same way that the German, Dutch, and Scandinavian tongues now spoken, have grown up from their Gothic roots.

Thirdly: All the Modern Gothic Tongues deviate less widely from their originals, than do the Modern Classical Tongues from the Latin. The great cause of difference lies in the Verbs. In the Latin verb, the active voice is wholly inflected, the passive partly so: in its descendants, the auxiliary forms have intruded far into the former, and taken complete possession of the latter. But, in all the Old Gothic Tongues, (the Anglo-Saxon included,) the disentanglement had, at the most remote date of our acquaintance with them, gone through some of the stages which the Latin of the Roman Empire had still to undergo. The Gothic verbs of all the dialects had already assumed most of the auxiliaries which they now have; being, in particular, (except in the old Icelandic,) entirely dependent on them for the formation of their passives.

Fourthly: While Englishmen have dealt with the verb much in the

same way as their kindred on the continent, they stand very differently in regard to the Nouns and Articles. The Modern Continental Languages of the Teutonic stock retain, in one shape or another, the inflected forms, which, as was lately noted, our Language has dropped; and they have retained with them the old susceptibility of inversion and composition. These differences are, in themselves, sufficient to give to the English a structural character very unlike that of such tongues as the German. Through them, indeed, we are, even in respect of the structure of our sentences, less purely Gothic than any other modern Goths. We bear, by means of them, no inconsiderable resemblance to the French. They cause us, in short, to occupy among the nations of Europe a philological station which is somewhat anomalous.

Fifthly: We are brought still nearer to our nearest continental neighbours, by the large amount of our Glossarial borrowings from the French and Latin. Nor is it unworthy of remark that these importations have, in all likelihood, acted reflexly on our Grammatical Structure. Our acquisitions in diction are foreign, both in place and in pedigree. If they had come from any tongue belonging to our own Gothic stock, not only would our speech have been more harmonious in character; but it would not improbably have been also more flexible in use, especially in respect of compounding, than it can be with words so distinctly alien in origin as are the Latin and French. No other European race has made similar appropriations, to an extent at all parallel to ours. The Spaniards seem to stand next to us, but are very far distant.

#### THE VOCABULARY OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE.

5. The Dictionary of the English Language will now be opened. We must learn, more precisely than we have hitherto been able to do, the character and origin of the words it contains.

Our task would soon be over, if we were to be content with knowing how many of our words are Anglo-Saxon, and how many come from foreign roots. But the question of Number, although we will put it by and by, is really more curious than useful. The answer to it tends, indeed, to deceive us as to the comparative value belonging to the several elements of a language. Words which are very numerous in the dictionary, may be of secondary consequence, and occur infrequently: words which are much fewer may be so essential to ordinary communication, as to be coming up incessantly.

The extent to which a tongue really depends on its various roots, is known only when we have discovered, what the Classes of Words

are that each has furnished. The roots are important, in the ratio of the importance which belongs to the classes of words arising out of them.

When our vocabulary is scrutinized in this way, its obligations to the Anglo-Saxon appear in a much more striking light, than that which they wear when we look only to the proportional numbers, large as we shall find that proportion to be.

Let us see, then, in entering on this inquiry, what kinds of words we derive from our Mother-Tongue.

First: We have from it almost all those words, and parts of words, which import Relations. This is merely repeating in another shape the assertion already made, that our grammatical forms and idioms are Anglo-Saxon: the vocabulary and the grammar react on each other. The fact, that our words of this class are chiefly Teutonic, cannot be too earnestly impressed on us. It is the most widely-reaching of all the circumstances affecting the character of our speech: it does more than any thing else in making the Teutonic to be the preponderating element.

Secondly: We owe to the same source not only, as has been seen already, all the adjectives, but also all the other words, both nouns and verbs, which the grammarians are accustomed to call Irregular. Such words are in all languages very old, indeed among the very oldest: they express ideas which occur to all of us continually in the business of life; and, for these reasons, they are oftener in our mouths than any others of their class. This fact, again, brings up Anglo-Saxon words continually.

Thirdly: The Saxon gives us in most instances our only names, and in all instances the names that are aptest and suggest themselves most readily, for the greater number of the Objects Perceived through the Senses, and for all of them that are most impressive and of the greatest consequence to us. Such are the most striking things which we see; as, sun, moon, and stars, land and water, wood and stream, hill and dale: to which may be added the most common animals and plants. Such are the great changes which take place in nature, and the causes of the changes; as the divisions of time (all except autumn\*); with light and darkness, heat and cold, rain and snow, thunder and lightning; and also the sounds, and postures, and motions of animal life. Here is another class of words remarkably numerous: and it is a class peculiarly energetic and vivid in impression.

Fourthly: Although we usually borrow from Latin or French

\* We have the Anglo-Saxon in *harvest*, which meant the season as well as the work.

such words as involve a wide abstraction, and are very extensive and general in meaning, yet those whose Signification is Specific are, with few exceptions, Anglo-Saxon. We use a foreign term naturalized, when we speak of colour universally: but we fall back on our home stores, if we have to tell what the colour is, calling it red, yellow, or blue, white or black, green or brown. Thus, also, we are Romans when we speak, in a general way, of moving: but we are Teutons if we leap or spring, if we stagger, slip, slide, glide, or fall, if we walk or run, swim or ride, if we creep, crawl, or fly. Now, not only are such precise words by far the most frequent: it is also a law of style, that, by how much a term is more specific, by so much is it the more animated and suggestive.

Fifthly: We possess, without going abroad to seek for them, a rich fund of apt expressions for the ordinary kinds of Feeling and Affection, for the outward signs of these, for the persons who are the earliest and most natural objects of our attachment, and for those inanimate things whose names are figuratively significant of domestic union. Of this class are love and hate, hope and fear, gladness and sorrow; such are the smile and tear, the sigh and groan, weeping and laughter; such are father and mother, man and wife, child, son and daughter, kindred and friends; such are home, hearth, roof, fireside. These are instances of a multitude of words, which, even when they are not the only names for the things, are the first we learn to give to them. Therefore they not only occur to us more readily than others, but have the power, through association, of recalling a host of the most touching images and emotions.

Sixthly: "The Anglo-Saxon is, for the most part, the language of Business; of the counting-house, the shop, the market, the street, the farm." Among an eminently practical people, it is eminently the organ of practical action: it retains this prerogative, in defiance alike of the necessary innovations caused by scientific discovery, and of the corruptions smuggled in by ignorant and mercenary affectation.

Seventhly: "A very large proportion (and that always the strongest) of the language of Invective, humour, satire, and colloquial pleasantry, is Anglo-Saxon."\*

It must surely be evident, that the Teutonic elements of our

\* The whole substance of this section is borrowed from an essay already cited; *Edinburgh Review*, Vol. LXX; 1839. To the seven classes of words which it has suggested, there may be added one other at least. It consists of those idiomatic phrases, and words, and parts of words, which are condemned in most of our current books on style, because they are not understood: but which are genuine fragments of our ancient tongue, and abound in pith and expressiveness.



vocabulary are equally valuable in enabling us to speak and write perspicuously, and to speak and write with animation; in making what we say easy to be understood, and in making it impressive and persuasive. Our mother-tongue, besides dictating the laws by which our words are connected, and furnishing the cement which binds them together, yields all our aptest means of describing imagination, feeling, and every-day facts of life.

6. Next in the order of importance, and incalculably more extensive than all borrowings to be afterwards examined, stand those parts of our vocabulary which we take from the French and Latin.

The former tongue being itself the offspring of the latter, it is often difficult for us to know which of the two has been our immediate source. Many of our words exist in an ambiguous form, which does not determine the question: and some we have in two shapes, as if they had been imported twice over.

The parent may first be looked at; since our obligations to her began earliest. From the Latin we have borrowed more or less for two thousand years, and freely for more than six centuries.

The first period was the Roman, to which we are but little indebted. It left a very few military terms, one or two of which have remained independent, while others have been incorporated in names of places. Examples, perhaps the only ones, are *Street*, the syllable *Coln* (from *Colonia*) in names like *Colne* and *Lincoln*, and *Chester* (from *Castrum*) alone or as part of a word.

Next, in the Anglo-Saxon period, the learning of the churchmen brought in a considerable number of terms, chiefly ecclesiastical. Such words, still in use, are *monk*, *bishop*, *saint*; *minster*, *porch*, *cloister*; *mass*, *psalter*, *epistle*; *pall*, *chalice*, and *candle*.

With the period after the Conquest, begins our difficulty in distinguishing our words of Latin origin from those of French. Importations which are plainly of the former kind make up nearly our whole nomenclature in theology and mental philosophy; while our most modern additions of the sort have embraced many miscellaneous terms. Our Latinisms have chiefly arisen in three epochs. The first was the thirteenth century, which, as we have seen, followed an age devoted to classical studies. Both its theological writers and its poets coined freely in the Roman mint. The second period was that which is loosely spoken of as the Elizabethan, beginning with the last twenty years of the sixteenth century, and extending yet farther into the next. In this age, during the enthusiasm of a new revival of admiration for antiquity, the privilege of naturalization was used, chiefly by its latest prose writers, to an extent



which threatened serious danger to purity and ease of speech.\* Thirdly came the latter part of the eighteenth century, the time when Johnson was the dictator of prose style. The pompous rotundity then prevalent has been permanently injurious. The number of new Latin words it has directly bequeathed to us, is really far from being large. But those it has given have come into very common use, instead of old Saxon words supposed to be less dignified: some of the words which were at first remonstrated against, are now heard in our most familiar sentences. Besides this, our ordinary forms of speech have received a Latin cast, quite alien from the old idiom; and the tendency seems to have been in no way diminished by the revived study of our early literature.

Our Latin words have done us, on the whole, very much more good than harm.

They go greatly farther than those from the French, towards making up for the laming which the tongue had suffered through the retrenchment of its power of composition.

A large proportion of them are expressive of complex ideas, each of whose elements might be separately expressed by Teutonic words still retained, and the union of which is still so expressed in the other languages of the same stock. Many such words were imperatively needed, after our speech had acquired even that degree of rigidity which had infected it so early as the thirteenth century. But it seems plain, that the ease with which the Latin, after it had begun to be decently understood by literary men, was found to furnish substitutes for the native compounds, must have tended much to discourage even that limited use of compounding, which might have been practised till the fifteenth or sixteenth century.

Many Latin words, too, have been introduced without such necessity, yet not without advantage. To those who trode the most thorny and obscure paths of thought, they often gave apt means of expressing nice distinctions; and the poets reaped from them, though usually by a sacrifice of suggestiveness, increased roundness and variety both in melody and in phrase.

7. Our French words now present themselves. Though much communication with France took place in the last of the Anglo-Saxon centuries, there is no surviving evidence of borrowings from its speech till after the Conquest.

The first stage, then, is that in which, the people and the few

\* Shakspeare marked the Latinisms in their earliest stage, and repeatedly ridiculed them. Desolation, Remuneration, and Accommodate, are among those which he puts into the mouths of persons who do not understand them.

instructed men being alike averse, the Norman French was introduced by the hand of power. Much of it must have been learned, in the course of two or three generations, even by reluctant and harshly used vassals; and many of its terms have retained a place which they must have gained very early. It furnished many law-phrases, which, oftenest continuing unchanged in form, and never going out beyond the precincts of the courts, need not be reckoned at all. But a very large number of words found their way, necessarily and not very slowly, into common conversation. The state of the laws, and of the political constitution, made it imperative that those words should be understood and used, which expressed private rights and the duties of individuals to the public, as well as all the relations between the sovereign power and the people. Feudalism, again, made the commons but too familiar with the whole array of phrases designating the rules and apparatus of the system.

In a second stage, the foreign words were sown rather more thickly. It began with the time, whenever that may have been, when the few native Englishmen who loved letters entered on the study of the French poetry. This cannot possibly have been so much as a hundred years after the Conquest; although our extant remains of attempts at translations from the French do not carry us back nearly so far.

Still there was nothing more than a beginning, till we reach the fourteenth century, when the third era of our Gallicisms may be held to open. Two causes then concurred in bringing about a great change. The English language was now spoken by all classes of society; and, in 1362, its ascendancy was admitted by the laws, the native speech being introduced into the pleadings of the courts. The French tastes of the nobles cannot, as a critic has remarked, have failed to contribute to the introduction of foreign words. These were still farther encouraged by the zeal with which, as we have already learned, Chaucer and other men of letters studied the poetry of France. Accordingly there now rose that tide of French diction, which, with many eddies and some checks, flowed on till the close of the middle ages. By that time the new words had become so numerous, and were so strongly ingrafted on the native stock, and the tongue had undergone so thoroughly the change of character which they imposed, that all subsequent additions are historically unimportant.

Yet it should be noted, that many words of French extraction have in modern times acquired a right of citizenship among us, influencing the turn of style to no small degree, in the periods when they have been most in favour. We shall learn, soon, to look for

such words especially in the latter half of the seventeenth century, through the literary taste which was then predominant.

The words which we have taken from the French serve, in great part, the same uses as those which have come to us immediately from the Latin originals. A great many of our general and abstract terms are to be found among them. Only, it may pretty safely be asserted, those which belong to this class enter much less into the nomenclature of serious and philosophical thought, than those which the Roman tongue has directly bestowed. They are, with few exceptions, conversant with the ideas and feelings of actual and everyday life : and the fact points out the channels through which they have reached us. Those that have come through books, have been introduced in the lighter departments of our literature : a vast number are such as found their way widely over Europe, in the times when France was, as she has been so often and so long, the social guide and model of Christendom.

Many other French words serve purposes of their own, which could not have been attained either by the native words or by the Latin. The mere possession of an ample supply of terms nearly synonymous, is, for many kinds of literary communication, an immense benefit in itself. Often, too, the relics of our Teutonic tongue that have descended to us, would not enable us to express at all, and our Latinisms would convey but very clumsily, slight distinctions and shades of thought : and still oftener would this take place with minute varieties of feeling and sentiment. We gain a great deal, in such cases, by that union of precision with delicacy which marks the French language. Not seldom, again, we desire to express our meaning with reserve, as on occasions when the giving of offence is dreaded : and here, on the one side, our native phrases would be too energetic and too suggestive ; while, on the other, the foreign ones are preferable, both as being poorer in associations, and on account of their own character.

8. The Greek has perhaps received more than justice, in being named at all, even as the last, among those languages which have contributed largely to our dictionary.

It would not deserve to be so ranked, if we were to have regard only to the dialect of common life. In it the only words of Greek origin are one or two, which have come to us after having been adopted and disguised elsewhere. In this predicament is the word Church.\*

Again, though our theological, philosophical, and scientific no-

\* Anglo-Saxon, *Circ* : Danish, *Kirke* : Scottish, *Kirk* : contracted from the Greek *Kyriake*, The Lord's (House).

menclature comprehends a large number of words originally Greek, almost all of these have come to us, since the revival of learning, through the Latin. If we note a very few words like *Phenomenon* and *Criterion*, which retain their Hellenic form, there is hardly, perhaps, any other certain instance of a direct derivation of such terms, till within the last two or three generations. In this period, however, the terminology in several branches of physical science has been fitted to the improved state of knowledge, by the combination of Greek roots into words entirely new. In this process, not always very skilfully performed, a large part has been borne by scientific discoverers belonging to our country.

9. There remain for consideration only some borrowings, which are so few and of so little consequence, that they might, with small loss of knowledge, be altogether overlooked.

First appears the oldest of our philological benefactors, the Celtic tongue in both of its native branches. From these we retain a large number of geographical names, oftenest denoting mountains, rivers, valleys, and other objects physically distinguishable. More recently we have received from the antiquaries a few miscellaneous words, such as *Bard* and *Druid*; while *Tartan*, *Plaid*, *Flannel*, and others, have owed their introduction to ordinary occasions. But, in making this low estimate of the obligations which the English owes to the Celtic dialects, we are overlooking the probability that the Anglo-Saxons themselves borrowed a great many words from their Cymrian subjects. Such words were especially likely to find their way into the speech of the Mercian Saxons: and a considerable number of terms, in very frequent use, which are not Saxon and may be French, have more plausibly been held to be Welsh, and to have been introduced in this way.\*

Secondly: Whatever we may believe as to the extent of the influence exercised by the Danes or Norwegians on any of the provincial dialects, it is certain that the Northmen of both races have left us a large number of local names, extending over the whole ground of their settlements. The most frequent is the word *By*, "a town," in such names as that of *Grimsby*, a place whose origin we formerly found to be sought in a Danish legend. *Wich* or *Wic*, the same in meaning, is likewise Scandinavian. The word *Hustings*, and two or three others, are said to be Danish.

Thirdly: Many foreign languages have contributed, especially in modern times, to make up for us a considerable stock of exotics. Those of each group relate to the history, institutions, or geography, of the country whence they come; and, while it was formerly the

\* Garnett: in the *Transactions of the Philological Society*; vol. i.: 1844.



fashion among literary men to attempt giving them a native dress, the inclination at present is to leave them unaltered. The matter is too trifling to justify many examples. From Spain and Portugal we have, with change, the names of two kinds of wine: the Persic furnishes the word Turban, and the Arabic (from its learning in the middle ages) such scientific terms as Algebra, alkali, alembic, besides a few names of social distinctions. Of late, also, there have been a good many convenient importations from the native tongues of India, and some undesirable ones from the provincialisms of our kinsmen in the United States.

10. It has already been observed, that the Numerical Proportion of words, considered without regard to their kinds, is a very unsafe test of the comparative importance of the elements constituting a language. But, as a matter of curiosity, it may justify a little inquiry, limited strictly to our mother-tongue.

Two questions occur. What proportion of the Anglo-Saxon words have we lost? What proportion to the bulk of Modern English is borne by the Anglo-Saxon words which we have in substance retained?

In answer to the first query, it has been said, on a calculation somewhat rough, that, of the words constituting the language used in Alfred's time, we have dropped about one-fifth. Bosworth's Anglo-Saxon Dictionary containing from twenty-six to twenty-eight thousand words, between five and six thousand of these are obsolete.\*

The Extinct portion contains many Uncompounded Words, whose place is supplied from other quarters. But its numbers are swelled by a huge mass of lost Compounds, a fact which it is interesting to remark, though not, at all points, very easy to account for. It shows that the new language, besides speedily acquiring an inaptitude to the making of compounds for itself, gave up very many of those which it inherited from its parent.

Most of the obsolete compounds are embraced in two classes.

The first consists of Verbs formed by prefixing prepositions or adverbs to the radical word. Thus the old representatives of our words "Come" and Go," brought with them many such words as these: To out-come and out-go; to in-come and in-go; to up-come and up-go; to off-come and off-go; to before-come and before-go. Nearly all such old compounds of these two words are out of use, and have their places filled by words from the French: while, of the few which we still have, there is probably not one that is used otherwise than figuratively.

\* Edinburgh Review, as before cited.



The second class of compounds (in which, by the way, the modern German is ponderously prolific) united two Substantives, the former of which took an adjectival or genitival meaning. Instances still surviving are such terms as these : Thundercloud, thunderstorm, earthquake, swordbearer. Our vocabulary of art and science has been greatly affected by our abandonment of one group of such words, formed from the Anglo-Saxon name for Art, which is the parent of our modern Craft. Examples are furnished by terms which, in modern English, would be represented by the following : Song-craft, book-craft, star-craft, number-craft, leech-craft. These we have Latinized into Poetry, literature, astronomy, arithmetic, and medicine : and we have named from the same source all the rest of our most ambitious pursuits. Of the ancient family once so flourishing, the sole survivors are Handicraft and Witchcraft ; names which were borne up through all the storms of the middle ages by the unceasing interest taken in the things they denote.\*

11. The answer to our second query, which relates to the Proportion of Saxon Words Retained in our language, may be sought by two methods.

The one leads us to the Dictionaries of Modern English. They are said to contain about thirty-eight thousand words, derivatives and compounds included. Of these, we are told, about twenty-three thousand come from the Anglo-Saxon, which thus yields a little less than five-eighths of the whole number.

The other test has been applied to the proportions in this way. Passages have been analyzed, from the authorized version of the Scriptures, and from fourteen popular writers, both in prose and verse, of whom the poet Spenser is the earliest, and Samuel Johnson the latest. Of the whole number of words examined, those that are not of Saxon origin make less than one-fifth, leaving more than four-fifths as native. The proportions in the several cases vary widely. The translators of the Bible are by far the purest. An extract from the book of Genesis has, of foreign words, one twenty-sixth ; and another from the Gospel of Saint John has one thirty-seventh ; the average of the two being one twenty-ninth. Among the other writers, the extreme places are held by Dean Swift, whose foreign

\* Woodcraft, if the word is now alive at all, is so only after having been disinterred by Sir Walter Scott. It was not used by the Anglo-Saxons ; because they had not, till the Norman times, the thing it signifies. Nor do they seem to have had the word Priestcraft. Saint Dunstan might have given occasion for it ; but among the Saxon clergy we read of very few Dunstans.

words amount to fewer than one-ninth; and Gibbon, the historian, who has considerably more than one-third.\*

This somewhat whimsical investigation is not worth prosecuting into our own century. To be really useful, for so much as the groundwork of a general classification of the words in the language, the examples would have to be both copious and many, and the topics treated in the extracts should be very various. As a criterion by which to judge of an author's style, such an analysis is, for many reasons, useless in all cases except such as present extreme peculiarities.

\* The particulars may be amusing; though they will perhaps confirm the opinion expressed in the text, that style cannot fairly be tried by such a standard. The whole number of words is 1696, of which the foreign ones are 303. The writers stand thus, in the order of their proportional purity: Translators of Bible, having foreign words,  $\frac{1}{9}$ ; Swift, less than  $\frac{1}{9}$ ; Cowley, less than  $\frac{1}{9}$ ; Shakspeare, less than  $\frac{1}{9}$ ; Milton, full  $\frac{1}{9}$ ; Spenser, Addison, and the poet Thomson, less than  $\frac{1}{9}$ ; Locke and Young, full  $\frac{1}{9}$ ; Johnson, full  $\frac{1}{9}$ ; Robertson the historian, less than  $\frac{1}{9}$ ; Pope,  $\frac{1}{9}$ ; Hume the historian, full  $\frac{1}{9}$ ; Gibbon, much more than  $\frac{1}{9}$ .—The passages examined will be found in Turner's *Anglo-Saxons*, vol. ii. (ed. 1836); the words were counted by the *Edinburgh Reviewer* before cited; and the proportions have now been reckoned in detail.

## PART THIRD.

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### THE LITERATURE OF MODERN TIMES.

A. D. 1509—A. D. 1852.

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#### CHAPTER I.

##### THE AGE OF THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION.

A. D. 1509—A. D. 1558.

Henry VIII.,.....	1509-1547.
Edward VI.,.....	1547-1553.
Mary,.....	1553-1558.

##### SECTION FIRST: SCHOLASTIC AND ECCLESIASTICAL LITERATURE IN ENGLAND.

INTRODUCTION. 1. Impulses affecting Literature—Checks impeding it—The Reformation—State Affairs—Classical Learning. 2. Influence of the Age on the Literature of the Next—Its Social Importance. CLASSICAL LEARNING. 3. Benefits of Printing—Greek and Latin Studies—Eminent Names—THEOLOGY. 4. Translations of the Holy Scriptures—Tyndale's Life and Labours—Coverdale—Rogers—Cranmer—Reigns of Edward the Sixth and Mary—Increase of Printers. 5. Original English Writings in Theology—Their General Character—Ridley—Cranmer—Tyndale's Controversial Treatises—Latimer's Sermons—Character of Latimer's Oratory.

##### INTRODUCTION TO THE PERIOD.

1. THE great frontier-line, between the Literary History of the Middle Ages and that of the times which we distinguish as Modern, lies, for England at least, in the early years of the sixteenth century. Intellect then began to be stirred by impulses altogether new; while others, which had as yet been held in check, were allowed, one after another, to work freely.

Yet there did not take place any sudden or universal metamorphosis, either in literature, or in those phenomena, social, intellectual, and religious, by which its forms and its spirit were determined. No such suddenness or completeness of change is possible. As well might the traveller, in descending southward from the pine-

forests and icy peaks of the Alps, hope to find himself transported at once into the orange-groves of Naples, or to see the palms of Sicily waving above his head.

All the influences by which English Literature was thenceforth to be affected, were of such a nature that their operation could not but be slow; and some of them manifested themselves in a fashion, which caused their immediate effects to be very unlike those that might have been expected to flow from them. Both of these things are true in regard to the Protestant Reformation, the mightiest of the forces which imprinted a new stamp on intellectual activity; and the first of them is true in regard to that new Revival of Classical Learning, which was the second of the predominating literary influences.

The change of faith, a change destined to generate the most beneficial and elevating developments of opinion and sentiment, was yet, through the very earnestness and intensity with which it concentrated the minds of thinking men on theological and ecclesiastical questions, decidedly unfavourable, for a time, to the more imaginative departments of literary exertion. The zeal, again, with which the purest models of Latin literature began anew to be studied, and the enthusiasm, yet keener, which attended the novel studies of our countrymen in the literature of Greece, produced, as it had in Italy not long before, both a dearth of originality and an inattention to the cultivation of the living tongue. Neither Protestant truth and freedom, nor Classical taste and knowledge, could ripen those literary fruits which were their natural offspring, until a process of training had been undergone, for which, in any circumstances, a generation or two would scarcely have been sufficient. But the circumstances which actually occurred, were such as necessarily suspended, for a time yet longer, the salutary operation of the purer and more active of the two influences. The student of history does not require to be reminded, how corruptly prompted, how incomplete and inconsistent in themselves, and how tyrannically and obnoxiously enforced, were the steps by which Henry the Eighth became the instrument of throwing off the yoke of Rome. We all know, likewise, how the short reign of Henry's admirable son was inadequate for enabling him and his advisers to purify thoroughly and found solidly the revolution thus superficial and incomplete; and how it thus became possible for Mary to compel, for a while, formal submission to a church in which few of her subjects now trusted, but whose evil nature still fewer of them knew well enough to be willing to sacrifice life as the penalty of dissent.

2. When, in a word, we reflect on the public events which

marked the reigns of those three sovereigns; when we consider, also, that every new kind of knowledge requires to suffer a process of digestion, before it can nourish the mind to healthy strength and inspire it with original energy; and when we remember how gradually and slowly the art of printing itself, the great instrument of modern enlightenment, diffused its blessings in the earliest times of its operation: we shall not be surprised to discover that, throughout a great part of the sixteenth century, English literature did not assume a character separating it decisively from that of the ages which had gone before. It did not really take its station as the worthy organ of a new epoch in the history of civilisation, until the reign of Elizabeth was within thirty years of its close.

We see, then, that our Literature, like our Language, has had its era of transition. This character belongs emphatically to the period whose phenomena we are about to study, and whose bounds might not unfitly be extended a little beyond the point at which, for the sake of convenience, it is here marked as ending. The scene is dimly lighted; and the figures that move in it are less august than those that will next appear. But the parts they play are, in a strict and proper sense, introductory to the great drama which is offered to us in the literary history of modern times. Among the brilliant works of the Elizabethan age, there is probably none, of which we may not detect germs in some of the efforts which were made within the half-century that preceded. The great prose writers, the masters of the drama, the students in the Italian school of poetry, all profited by what had then been done. The literary poverty of the Age of the Reformation was the poverty which the settler in an unpeopled country has to endure, while he fells the woods that overshadowed him, and sows his half-tilled fields. It was a poverty in the bosom of which lay rich abundance.

Accordingly this epoch, so unspeakably momentous in the social history of Christendom, requires, even from the student of literature, an amount of attention far beyond that which might seem due to its literary efforts, if these were judged merely as they are in themselves. The relations, likewise, which subsisted between the intellectual and the religious changes, present themselves to us with a frequency which is exceedingly instructive, and through which a light is thrown, by each of the two paths of progress, on the events that were occurring in the other. It is very curious to remark in how many odd ways we see the literature of the day, and the ecclesiastical and theological reforms, mixed up together and exercising a mutual action.

Nor do we linger reluctantly over the history of an era, in which,



for the sake of goodness and of truth, so much, so very much, was earnestly thought, and bravely done, and patiently suffered. Alike in the acts, and in the intellectual efforts, of the men who, in the face of danger and of death, guided the opinions and the deeds of that agitated generation, we acknowledge, amidst all weaknesses and faults and sins, a mighty course of events, governed by the hand of Him who has willed that man should know the truth and through the truth be free. On us, the inheritors of the blessings which our forefathers won, devolves the duty of understanding rightly the lessons which their history teaches, and of applying those lessons to our lives and sentiments, in the spirit of enlightened knowledge and of Christian love.

#### CLASSICAL LEARNING.

3. The Classical Learning of the age claims our notice first. Its cultivation stood in a twofold relation to the changes in the church. It was, antecedently, one of the causes of deviation from received opinions; and it became, afterwards, one of the instruments most actively used in ecclesiastical controversy, both for attack and for defence.

This was the department of knowledge, and its students were the class of readers, that profited, in the first instance, more than any others, by the diffusion of the art of printing. The early press was employed in the multiplication of ancient books, much more frequently than in producing works in any of the living tongues. Of the ten thousand editions of books, large and small, which are said to have been printed before the close of the fifteenth century, more than half appeared in Italy; and a very large proportion of these consisted of classical works. Our English press, producing in all, before that date, no more than about a hundred and forty, contributed nothing in this department; but the increased facilities of communication between different countries put quickly at the disposal of our scholars both the knowledge and the publications of the continent. And students were now placed in a position of incalculable advantage, by the reduced price of books. They cost, it is said, one-fifth only of the sums which had been paid for manuscripts.

Foreign men of letters, also, visited England; and a strong impulse was given, especially, by the presence of the accomplished Erasmus. This celebrated scholar, writing about the middle of our period, pronounces England to have then been more exactly learned than any continental nation, excepting Italy alone. Classical

studies were prosecuted, with remarkable ardour, in both of the directions in which the improvements of the continent had already begun. Greek was studied accurately for the first time: Latin was learned with an accuracy and purity never before attained.

The language and literature of Greece had been introduced before the beginning of the century, by William Grocyn, justly called the patriarch of English learning, who had studied in Italy under the fugitive scholars from Constantinople. The appearance of this new branch of erudition excited at first an alarm, which divided Oxford into two factions, the Greeks and the Trojans. But enlightenment speedily forced its way. Thomas Linacre, the first physician of the day, translated Galen and other authors into Latin, and wrote original treatises in the same tongue; and William Lilly, the author, in part, of the old Latin Grammar which bears his name, learned Greek at Rhodes, and, on the foundation of Saint Paul's school, was the first who publicly taught the language in England. Cambridge next became the focus of Hellenic learning, through the teaching of two very able men, both of whom were soon withdrawn from the academic cloisters to the arena of public business: Sir Thomas Smith, who became one of the most eminent statesmen of his time; and Sir John Cheke, whose name will be remembered by most of us as introduced in a sonnet of Milton.

Latin scholarship flourished not less, in the hands of these and other zealous promoters. Among those who became most distinguished in this department, were several who likewise attained to eminence elsewhere. Such was Cardinal Pole, Cranmer's successor in the see of Canterbury, and one of the most accomplished of those ecclesiastics who adhered to the old faith. Of the Reformers, though several were creditable scholars, none seem to have been very highly celebrated except the martyr Ridley. Of other Latinists it is enough to name Leland, best known in modern times for his researches into English antiquities; Roger Ascham, the tutor of Queen Elizabeth; and the celebrated and unfortunate Sir Thomas More.

The Latin writings of Ascham are miscellaneous, and not very important. The principal work which More composed in that language, was the "Utopia," in which he described an imaginary commonwealth, placed on an imaginary island from which the book takes its name, and having a polity whose main feature is a thorough community of property. The epithet "Utopian" is still familiar to us, as descriptive of chimerical and fantastic schemes; and, notwithstanding the good Latinity of More's treatise, and the similarity of its design to that of Plato's Republic,

the leading idea really looks so like a grave jest, and such jesting was so much in accordance with the character of the man, that we are reminded by it of those half-serious apologues which we found to be prevalent in the monasteries of the middle ages. The work, in truth, is a romance, although clothed in a scholastic garb; and it abounds with touches of humour and strokes of homely illustration. Nor is it wanting in those lessons of wisdom, which its strong-minded writer loved so much to inculcate with his quiet smile. It is striking, perhaps humiliating to modern pride of enlightenment, to hear the chancellor of Henry the Eighth urging the education of the people, asserting solemnly that it is better to prevent crime than to punish it, and denouncing the severities of the penal code as discreditable to England.

Among the other scholars of the time, may be named John Bale, who, in the reign of Edward the Sixth, was made bishop of Ossory. Although he was a voluminous writer of English theological tracts, chiefly controversial, his memory is now preserved only by certain lighter effusions, to be named soon, and by his series of Latin Lives of old British Writers, which is still an authoritative book of reference.

The stock of ancient learning was thus very large. But it was accumulated in the hands of a few capitalists. The communication of it, however, to a wider circle, was anxiously aimed at, by the foundation of schools and colleges, of which a larger number was established in the hundred years which end with the accession of Elizabeth, than in any equal period throughout the course of our history. The most celebrated benefactors were Dean Colet, the founder of Saint Paul's School, and himself one of the most skilful Latinists of his time; and Cardinal Wolsey, who was a man of learning as well as of political ability.

#### THEOLOGICAL LITERATURE IN ENGLISH.

4. Among the works couched in the living tongue, the most important, by very far, were those which were devoted to Theology.

Foremost among such efforts, and claiming from us reverent and thankful attention, were the Translations of the Scriptures into English, none of which had been publicly attempted since that of Wycliffe. The history of these is very interesting; not only for its own sake, but also because, as we shall speedily learn, our received version of the Bible owes largely to them.

b. ab. 1485. } William Tyndale, a native of Gloucestershire, a man  
d. 1536. } of studious and ascetic habits, imbibed, in the early part  
of Henry's reign, many of the opinions of the continental reformers;

and he expressed these so openly, in private intercourse and occasional preaching in the country, that his stay at home was no longer safe. He sought refuge in Hamburg and elsewhere, and, in two or three years, completed a translation of the New Testament. It was printed, under his own care, at Antwerp, in 1526; but it has lately been shown that two surreptitious editions had appeared the year before. In these and other impressions, it was immediately introduced by stealth into England; Tyndale being employed, meanwhile, on the Old Testament. His version of the Five Books of Moses, really printed successively in different foreign towns, was next collected into one volume, which, the statement of the real place being dangerous, was described as printed "at Marlborough, in the land of Hesse." Its date is January 1530, which, the old style being then in use, corresponds with the beginning of our year 1531. His next publication was a revisal of his New Testament, which appeared at Antwerp in 1534: and with it his labours were nearly at a close. Imprisoned at Antwerp for heresy, he was there, after a long imprisonment, strangled and burnt, in October 1536. In that very year his New Testament was reprinted in England; this being the first translation that issued from an English press.

The scene was now changed. Henry the Eighth had come to an irretrievable breach with the See of Rome; and the opening of the Bible to the unlearned was no longer to be held a crime, or practised secretly in the fear of punishment. In 1537 there was published, with a dedication to the King and Queen, the first complete Translation of the Bible. The translator was a clergyman, Miles Coverdale, who afterwards was made bishop of Exeter. From this version are taken the Psalms still used in the Book of Common Prayer. In the same year there appeared, on the continent, a complete translation, which, veiled under a fictitious name, was called "Matthew's Bible." It was edited by John Rogers, who, some years later, was the first Protestant burned by Queen Mary. About a third of it is attributed to the editor himself, perhaps with consultation of Coverdale's version: two-thirds, embracing the whole of the New Testament, and the Old as far as the end of the Second Book of Chronicles, were, we are told, taken verbatim from Tyndale.

Besides Tyndale's own editions of his New Testament, as many as twenty others had been printed on the continent, and circulated widely through England, before his death. English reprints now became common; and among them were two or three of Coverdale's whole translation.

The reign of Henry gives us, in the last place, the Translation



commonly called Cranmer's, from its chief promoter, but known also as the Great Bible, from the size in which its earliest impressions were printed. It is usually said to differ very slightly from Coverdale's, and to have been prepared chiefly by him. But the most recent writer of the history of the English Bible seems to consider this as a mistake, founded on the appearance of other editions about the same time under the patronage of Cranmer; and, according to this authority, Cranmer's Bible is really a revision of Tyndale's. Its date, also, commonly set down as 1539, appears to be 1540.

The short reign of Edward the Sixth, the Josiah of England, (as he has aptly been called,) produced no new translation; but it was fertile, to a marvel, in reprints of those already made, Tyndale's being seemingly the most popular. In the six years and a half during which this young king filled the throne, the English Bible, which he had caused to be carried before him at his coronation, was printed entire in fourteen editions at least; and the editions of the New Testament by itself amounted nearly to thirty.

The accession of Queen Mary stopped, of course, the printing of the Scriptures in England, and made the circulation of the translations, fortunately for the last time, a thing to be attempted only in secrecy and with fear. Yet even this perilous time introduced one new translation from abroad; namely, the "Geneva" New Testament. It was a revision of Tyndale's, performed by William Whittingham, a refugee fellow of Oxford. We shall encounter him again in the same walk: and then also will appear the received version of the Bible.

In the meantime, the student of literature may be invited to observe, how the history of this, the record of the Divine Will, and the history of human and uninspired productions, dovetail into each other, and reflect mutual light. Some of the most valuable contributions ever made to our knowledge of the progress of intellectual culture in Scotland, were incorporated, not very long ago, in a summary of the history of Bible-printing in the country. Here, again, in noting the diffusion of the Scriptures in England, we encounter some particulars, showing how far the benefits of the press were allowed to be reaped under the arbitrary and capricious sway of Henry, and how rapidly those benefits extended themselves when free communication of all kinds of knowledge was permitted by his excellent son.

At the accession of Henry the Eighth, there appear to have been no more than four printers in England. Before his death the number had risen to forty-five. Of these no fewer than thirty-three



appeared in the last twenty years of his reign ; that is, during the time when he was gradually seceding from Rome, and had begun to relax, in his vacillating and arbitrary way, the restrictions by which literary communication was fettered. Still more remarkable was that which followed. Fourteen of the forty-five printers surviving when Edward the Sixth ascended the throne, his short rule of tolerance and enlightenment added forty-three to the list, raising the whole number to fifty-seven. Of these, likewise, thirty-one, or more than a half, took part in the printing or publication of the Scriptures.

5. Our attention cannot long be given to the Original Writings, couched in the English tongue, and dealing with theological matters. Chiefly, of course, controversial, they discuss questions for which this is no fit place ; and yet, without treating these, the merits of the works could not be fairly appreciated. But the truth is, that the treatises of the sort, which this stirring period has transmitted to us, are neither so numerous as we might have expected, nor marked by qualities which make them very important in the history of literature. Neither the learning nor the power of thinking possessed either by the Reformers or by their opponents could be estimated rightly, unless full account were taken of the writings, on both sides, which appeared in the Latin tongue : and, though we were to judge with the aid of these materials, still the records of a struggle, so hampered by secular interferences and so inextricably mixed up with political considerations, would scarcely do justice either to the momentous character of the contest, or to the real ability and knowledge of those who maintained it.

It may be enough to name a very few of those who, dying for the faith which they taught, have a purer title to the reverence of posterity than any that could have been gained by the highest literary merit. Ridley, held to have been one of the most dexterous disputants of his time, and famous as a preacher, has already been noticed as the most learned of the Reformers. Cranmer was more remarkable for his patronage of theological learning, than for the merit possessed by any writings of his own : but his extant English compositions are numerous.

Two others of the martyrs, whose names seldom occur in any general history of literature, were men of much though dissimilar power ; and these might be taken, more fitly than most others, as examples both of the turn of thinking which then prevailed, and of the state of progress of the English language.

The one was Tyndale, our honoured translator of the Scriptures. His English tracts, quite controversial in character, were likewise

nothing more than interludes between his weightier labours. Yet, slight as they are, his "Obedience of a Christian Man," his dissertation on the parable of "The Wicked Mammon," his "Practice of Prelates," and his few expositions and prefaces, not only show great clearness of thinking and aptness of illustration, but are exceedingly favourable specimens of Old English style.\*

b. ab. 1472. } Our second instance is the celebrated Latimer, whose  
d. 1555. } literary remains, chiefly sermons and letters, are of a very different stamp, but exceedingly interesting and instructive.

In the writings of this venerable man we discover no depth of learning, and as little refinement of taste: but they abound in homely sense and shrewdness; they show at once earnest and deep piety, and a quiet courage, prognosticating indomitable endurance; and

\* WILLIAM TYNDALE.

*From "The Practice of Prelates;" published in 1530.*

[The modern spelling is generally adopted in this Extract, and in those that follow.]

To see how Our Holy Father came up, mark the ensample of an Ivy Tree. First it springeth out of the earth, and then a while creepeth along by the ground, till it findeth a great tree; then it joineth itself beneath alow unto the body of the tree, and creepeth up, a little and a little, fair and softly. And, at the beginning, while it is yet thin and small, that the burden is not perceived, it seemeth glorious, to garnish the tree in winter, and to bear off the tempests of the weather. But, in the mean season, it thrusteth roots into the bark of the tree, to hold fast withal; and ceaseth not to climb up, till it be at the top and above all. And then it sendeth his branches along by the branches of the tree, and overgroweth all, and waxeth great, heavy, and thick; and sucketh the moisture so sore out of the tree and his branches, that it choketh and stifeth them. And then the foul ivy waxeth mighty in the stump of the tree, and becometh a seat and a nest for all unclean birds, and for blind owls which hawk in the dark, and dare not come at the light.

Even so the Bishop of Rome, at the beginning, crope along upon the earth; and every man trode upon him in this world. But, as soon as there came a Christian Emperor, he joined himself unto his feet, and kissed them, and crope up a little with begging; now this privilege, now that; now this city, now that; to find poor people withal, and the necessary ministers of the Word. \* \* \* And thus, with flattering, and feigning, and vain superstition under the name of Saint Peter, he crept up, and fastened his roots in the heart of the Emperor; and with his sword climbed up above all his fellowships, and brought them under his feet. And, as he subdued them with the Emperor's sword, even so, by subtlety and help of them, after that they were sworn faithful, he climbed above the Emperor, and subdued him also; and made him stoop unto his feet and kiss them another while. Yea, Celestinus crowned the Emperor Henry the Fifth, holding the crown between his feet. And, when he had put the crown on, he smote it off with his feet again, saying that he had might to make emperors and put them down again.

they are inspired with a cheerfulness which never fails. Those who sneered at Sir Thomas More as a scoffing jester, might have found still apter ground for censure in many effusions of Latimer, both while he preached to the peasants of Wiltshire and after he had become the bishop of an important diocese. He jests, and plays on words, when he writes letters of business to Cromwell the secretary of state; and, in the pulpit, seizing eagerly on all opportunities of interesting his audience by allusions to facts of ordinary life, he never allows his illustrations to lose their force through any fear of infringing on the gravity of the place. His "Sermon on the Plough," the only one remaining from a series of three on the same text, expounds and illustrates the duties of the ploughman, that is, the preacher of the Gospel, with equal ingenuity of application and plainness of speech. In a passage that has often been quoted, he takes occasion to describe the experience of his own youth, and the frugality of his father's rural household. In another place, the duty of residence, strongly urged on the clergy throughout the discourse, is enforced by a very original similitude. The spiritual husbandman, he says, ought to supply continual food to his people: the preaching of the word is meat, daily sustenance: it is not strawberries, which come but once a-year and do not tarry long. The metaphor appears to have been relished, and to have suggested a descriptive name for clerical absentees. In an extant sermon of the time, they are spoken of as "strawberry-preachers." An excursion yet wider from clerical formalities is ventured on in his set of "Sermons on the Card." Preaching at Cambridge in Christmas, he tells his hearers, that, as they are accustomed to make card-playing one of the occupations in which they celebrate the festival, he will deal to them a better kind of cards, and show them a game in which all the players may win. One scriptural text after another is pronounced and commented on in the odd manner thus promised: and the great truth, of the importance of the affections in religion, is thrown repeatedly into this quaint shape; that, in the game of souls, hearts are always trumps.\*

\* HUGH LATIMER.

*From the Sermon on the Plough; preached in January 1548.*

But now methinketh I hear one say unto me: Wot ye what you say? Is preaching a work? Is it a labour? How then hath it happened that we have had, so many hundred years, so many unpreaching prelates, lording loiterers, and idle ministers? Ye would have me here to make answer, and to show the cause thereof. Nay! This land is not for me to plough. It is too stony, too thorny, too hard for me to plough. They have so many things that make for them, so many things to lay for themselves, that it is not for

Such eccentricities, however discordant with modern taste, must be judged with a recollection of the time in which they appeared ; and their prevalence is a feature not to be overlooked, in the eloquence of a man who was admittedly one of the most impressive public speakers of his day. His sermons deserve commendation more unqualified, for their general simplicity of plan. They have little or nothing of the scholastic complication and multiplicity of subdivisions, which made their appearance in the theological compositions of the next age, and which characterize almost all efforts of the kind made in our language till we have proceeded beyond the middle of the seventeenth century.

Before we quit those who acted and suffered in the Reformation, we must remember John Fox, their zealous but honest memorialist. His "History of the Acts and Monuments of the Church," better known as "The Book of Martyrs," was first printed in his exile, towards the close of our period.

my weak team to plough them. And I fear me this land is not yet ripe to be ploughed : for, as the saying is, it lacketh weathering ; this gear lacketh weathering ; at least way it is not for me to plough. For what shall I look for among thorns, but pricking and scratching ? What among stones, but stumbling ? What (I had almost said) among serpents, but stinging ? But this much I dare say, that, since lording and loitering hath come up, preaching hath come down, contrary to the Apostles' times ; for they preached and lorded not, and now they lord and preach not. \* \* \* And thus, if the ploughmen of the country were as negligent in their office as prelates be, we should not long live, for lack of sustenance. And as it is necessary for to have this ploughing for the sustentation of the body, so must we have also the other for the satisfaction of the soul ; or else we cannot live long ghostly. For, as the body wasteth and consumeth away for lack of bodily meat, so doth the soul pine away for default of ghostly meat.

## CHAPTER II.

## THE AGE OF THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION.

A. D. 1509—A. D. 1558.

SECTION SECOND : MISCELLANEOUS LITERATURE IN ENGLAND;  
AND LITERATURE ECCLESIASTICAL AND MISCELLANEOUS  
IN SCOTLAND.

MISCELLANEOUS PROSE IN ENGLAND. 1. Secondary Importance of the Works—Sir Thomas More—His Style—His Historical Writings—His Tracts and Letters.—2. Roger Ascham—His Style—His *Toxophilus*—His Schoolmaster—Prosody—Female Education—Wilson's Logic and Rhetoric.—ENGLISH POETRY. 3. Poetical Aspect and Relations of the Age—Its Earliest Poetry—Satires—Barklay—Skelton's Works.—4. Lord Surrey—His Literary Influence—Its Causes—His Italian Studies—His Sonnets—Introduction of Blank Verse—His Supposed Influence on English Versification.—5. Wyatt—Translations of the Psalms—The Mirror of Magistrates—Its Influence—Its Plan and Authors—Sackville's Induction and Complaint of Buckingham.—INFANCY OF THE ENGLISH DRAMA. 6. Retrospect—The English Drama in the Middle Ages—Its Religious Cast—The Miracle-Plays—The Moral-Plays.—7. The Drama in the Sixteenth Century—Its Beginnings—Skelton—Bishop Bale's Moral Plays—Heywood's Interludes.—8. Appearance of Tragedy and Comedy—Udall's Comedy of *Roister Doister*—The Tragedy of *Gorboduc*, by Sackville and Norton.—LITERATURE IN SCOTLAND. 9. Literary Character of the Period—Obstacles—State of the Language.—10. Scottish Poetry—Sir David Lindsay—His Satirical Play—Its Design and Effects—His other Poems.—11. First Appearance of Original Scottish Prose—Translations—The Complaint of Scotland—Pitscottie—State of Learning—Boece—John Major.—12. John Knox—George Buchanan's Latin Works—Other Latinists—Melville—Scottish Universities—Schools.

## MISCELLANEOUS PROSE LITERATURE IN ENGLAND.

1. PAUSING in our survey of ecclesiastical literature in England, at the moment when Protestantism rejoiced in the accession of Elizabeth, we quit the cloister, from which the monks have been cast out, and the church, in which the mass is no longer chanted; and we are content, perforce, with the little we have had time to learn in regard to the most abstruse of the studies out of which emerged the light of the Reformation. We now look abroad on



those literary pursuits of the same period, whose aim was neither religious nor ecclesiastical, and whose natural and appropriate organ was the living tongue of the nation.

New actors will appear on the scene : yet some of those whom we have encountered as combatants in the fiery struggle of creeds, will again be seen in the quieter walks along which our eye is next to be guided. Nor are the few names, which only can here be set down, sufficient to show, at all distinctly, how close was the connexion, in that fervent age, not only between the ecclesiastical changes and the progress of literature, but between the men who led the former and those who most efficiently promoted the latter.

While the theological writings which have just been noticed are, admittedly, valuable chiefly for their matter, the miscellaneous writings of the age in English prose attract us most as specimens of the language in its earliest stage of maturity. None of them exhibit either such eloquence or such vigour of thought, as should entitle them to a high rank among the monuments of our literature ; and, with few exceptions, the very names of the writers have been allowed to sink into complete oblivion.

b. 1480. } Sir Thomas More was commemorated when we studied  
d. 1535. } the progress of the language, as having been called the earliest writer whose English prose was good. This eminent man wrote purely, naturally, and perspicuously. His style, indeed, has very great excellence ; and it, with that of the other writer who will here be cited, should be studied as characteristically showing, when we compare it with the manner of the prose which was written in the next period, a simplicity, both of construction and of diction, which may be accounted for in more ways than one. Certainly less cumbersome, as well as less exotic, the style of More and Ascham may have been so, either because classical studies had not yet become familiar enough to produce a great effect on the manner of expression, or because the writers were compelled to be the less ambitious in proportion to their want of mastery over the resources of their native tongue.

More's works, Latin and English, are but the recreations in which a highly accomplished man, placed in the midst of a learned age, spent the little leisure allowed by a life of professional and public business. His Historical Writings are among the very earliest that belong to our period ; and they have received very warm commendation, not only for their style, but for the ease and spirit of the narrative. There is not any work of the fifteenth century, that has merit enough to forbid our considering him as the earliest writer of the English language, who rose to the dignity and skill of proper his-

tory. His Controversial Tracts are perhaps equally good in language ; but, occupied with the ecclesiastical questions of his day, they fall beyond our sphere. His " Dialogue concerning Heresies " led him into a hot contest with Tyndale. When we are thus reminded that More adhered to the old faith, we must remember also that this was the losing side, and that the great and good man proved his sincerity by dying for what he held to be the truth. He was as really a martyr as Cranmer ; and he was much braver and more upright in conduct. Nowhere do we meet him on ground where his cheerful kindness and excellent judgment have freer room to work, than in his private letters, especially those which he addressed to the members of his family ; and from none of his writings could we cull examples better illustrating the character of his style.\*

\* SIR THOMAS MORE.

*A Letter to his Children ; written about 1525.*

Thomas More, to his best beloved children, and to Margaret, whom he numbereth among his own, sendeth greeting.

The merchant of Bristow brought unto me your letters, the next day after he had received them of you ; with the which I was exceedingly delighted. For there can come nothing, yea though it were never so rude, never so meanly polished, from this your shop, but it procureth me more delight than any others' works, be they never so eloquent : your writing doth so stir up my affection towards you. But, excluding this, your letters may also very well please me for their own worth, being full of fine wit and of a pure Latin phrase : therefore none of them all but joyed me exceedingly. Yet, to tell you ingenuously what I think, my son John's letter pleased me best ; both because it was longer than the other, as also for that he seemeth to have taken more pains than the rest. For he not only painteth out the matter decently, and speaketh elegantly ; but he playeth also pleasantly with me, and returneth my jests upon me again, very wittily : and this he doth not only pleasantly, but temperately withal ; showing that he is mindful with whom he jesteth, to wit, his father, whom he endeavoureth so to delight that he is also afear'd to offend.

Hereafter I expect every day letters from every one of you : neither will I accept of such excuses as you complain of ; that you have no leisure, or that the carrier went away suddenly, or that you have no matter to write : John is not wont to allege any such thing. Nothing can hinder you from writing ; but many things may exhort you thereto. Why should you lay any fault upon the carrier, seeing you may prevent his coming, and have them ready made up and sealed two days before any offer themselves to carry them ? And how can you want matter of writing unto me, who am delighted to hear either of your studies or of your play ; whom you may even then please exceedingly, when, having nothing to write of, you write as largely as you can of that nothing, than which nothing is more easy for you to do.

b. 1515. } 2. The writings of the learned and judicious Ascham  
d. 1568. } possess, both in style and in matter, a value which must not be measured by their inconsiderable bulk. Their language is pure, idiomatic, vigorous English: they exhibit great variety of knowledge, remarkable sagacity, and sound common-sense.

Of his three large treatises, the earliest was a "Report on the State of Germany," being a digested account of his observations on the political affairs of the continent; a discourse highly creditable to the writer's shrewdness, but now uninteresting, unless to the exact students of the history of the times.

Next came the "Toxophilus: the School or Partitions of Shooting." It is a treatise on Archery; an art which, now a mere pastime, and even then beginning to be superseded in warfare, had not yet lost all the importance it possessed when the English bowmen thinned the French ranks at Agincourt. The work is a dialogue in two books, sustained with much liveliness of tone, as well as discrimination of character, between Philologus, a student, and Toxophilus, a lover of archery. The form is thus adopted from classical models; and it is a point illustrative of the tastes of the day, that the author, in his preface, thinks it necessary to justify himself for writing in English rather than in Latin. The second of the two books is a manual of the rules of the art; the first is a curious dissertation on its value. It is recommended for general adoption on the ground of its military importance, which is shown by a variety of instances spiritedly related. It is recommended especially to persons of studious habits; being, it is alleged, the best of all those amusements which, as the writer maintains with great force of reasoning, are absolutely required by reading

But this I admonish you to do; that, whether you write of serious matters or of trifles, you write with diligence and consideration, premeditating of it before. Neither will it be amiss, if you first indite it in English; for then it may more easily be translated into Latin, whilst the mind, free from inventing, is attentive to find apt and eloquent words. And, although I put this to your choice, whether you will do so or no, yet I enjoin you, by all means, that you diligently examine what you have written before you write it over fair again; first considering attentively the whole sentence, and after examine every part thereof; by which means you may easily find out if any solecisms have escaped you; which being put out, and your letter written fair, yet then let it not also trouble you to examine it over again; for sometimes the same faults creep in at the second writing, which you before had blotted out. By this your diligence you will procure, that those your trifles will seem serious matters. For, as nothing is so pleasing but may be made unsavoury by prating garrulity, so nothing is by nature so unpleasant, that by industry may not be made full of grace and pleasantness.

Farewell, my sweetest children. From the Court, this 3d of September.

men, for the sake both of health and of mental relaxation. Gaming, and other censurable diversions, are energetically denounced. The common athletic games are maintained, more ingeniously than soundly, to be in several ways objectionable; and music itself, admitted to be an essential part in the education of a scholar and a gentleman, is yet asserted to have disadvantages from which the manly old English exercise is quite exempt.\*

\* ROGER ASCHAM.

*From the Preface to the "Toxophilus;" published in 1544.*

If any man would blame me, either for taking such a matter in hand, or else for writing it in the English tongue, this answer I may make him; that, when the best of the realm think it honest for them to use, I, one of the meanest sort, ought not to suppose it vile for me to write. And, though to have written it in another tongue had been both more profitable for my study, and also more honest for my name; yet I can think my labour well bestowed, if, with a little hindrance of my profit and name, may come any furtherance to the pleasure or commodity of the gentlemen and yeomen of England, for whose sake I took this matter in hand.

And as for the Latin or Greek tongue, everything is so excellently done in them that none can do better; in the English tongue, contrary, every thing in a manner so meanly, both for the matter and handling, that no man can do worse. For therein the least learned, for the most part, have been always most ready to write. And they which had least hope in Latin, have been most bold in English; when surely every man that is most ready to talk, is not most able to write.

He that will write well in any tongue, must follow this counsel of Aristotle: to speak as the common people do, to think as wise men do: as so should every man understand him, and the judgment of wise men allow him. Many English writers have not done so, but, using strange words, as Latin, French, and Italian, do make all things dark and hard. Once I communed with a man which reasoned the English tongue to be enriched and increased thereby, saying, "Who will not praise that feast, where a man shall drink at a dinner both wine, ale, and beer?" "Truly," quoth I, "they be all good, every one taken by himself alone; but, if you put malmsey and sack, red wine and white, ale and beer, and all in one pot, you shall make a drink not easy to be known, nor yet wholesome for the body."

English writers, by diversity of time, have taken divers matters in hand. In our fathers' time, nothing was read but books of feigned chivalry, wherein a man by reading should be led to none other end but only manslaughter and lewdness. If any man suppose they were good enough to pass the time withal, he is deceived. For surely vain words do work no small thing in vain, ignorant, and young minds; especially if they be given anything thereunto of their own nature. These books, as I have heard say, were made the most part in abbeys and monasteries; a very likely and fit fruit of such an idle and blind kind of living. In our time, now, when every man is given to know, much rather than to live well, very many do write, but after such a fashion as very many do shoot. Some shooters take in hand



There is much greater value in the matter, but considerably less of liveliness in the composition, of Ascham's most celebrated work, "The Schoolmaster." It is introduced in a strain reminding us, yet again, of the manner in which the philosophers of antiquity loved to give an air of dramatic reality to their speculations. In the year 1563, when the court had sought refuge at Windsor from the plague which then raged in London, Elizabeth's tutor dines, with several of the royal counsellors, in the chamber of the secretary, the elder Cecil, afterwards known by his title of Lord Burleigh. The host says he had just heard, that some of the pupils of Eton had run away from the school for fear of beating. The news leads to a conversation on the discipline of the young, and the comparative efficacy of love and fear in teaching. The treasurer, Sir Richard Sackville, who is described as taking a lively interest in the education of his grandsons, pays close attention to the discussion; and, after Ascham had been released from his reading of Demosthenes with the Queen, the argument is renewed between the two. On Sackville's request, Ascham proceeds to record his opinions, dividing his treatise into two books. The first is described as "Teaching the Bringing up of Youth." It abounds with good sense and right feeling, and, though scholastic and somewhat formal in shape, is still interesting as well as suggestive. The Second Book is announced as "Teaching the Ready Way to the Latin Tongue." It has the appearance of being incomplete; the excellent critical remarks on Roman authors breaking off abruptly. While the whole work well deserves to be studied by teachers, this part of it, in particular, proposes improvements for which there are still both room and need; and the value of the hints is not unappreciated. One of the first classical scholars of our own day, in recently editing a work of Cicero, has supported his arguments in support of certain methods of teaching, by a long quotation from Ascham's Second Book.

stronger bows than they be able to maintain. This thing maketh them sometime to overshoot the mark, sometime to shoot far wide, and perchance hurt some that look on. Other, that never learned to shoot, nor yet knoweth good shaft nor bow, will be as busy as the best. If any man will apply these things together, he shall not see the one far differ from the other.

And I also, amongst all other, in writing this little treatise, have followed some young shooters, which both will begin to shoot for a little money, and also will use to shoot once or twice about the mark for nought, before they begin for good. And therefore did I take this little matter in hand, to assay myself; and hereafter, if judgment of wise men that look on think that I can do any good, I may perchance cast my shaft among other, for better game.



Two passages of "The Schoolmaster" deserve, for different reasons, special remembrance.

In the one, the writer treats the versification of the modern languages. He vehemently condemns rhyme as barbarous, urging a return to the unrhymed measures of the ancients. Yet he shows that he understood thoroughly the prosodial structure of the English tongue. For, on the one hand, he prophesies utter failure in all attempts to naturalize the classical hexameters; attempts which were industriously made in the next generation, and had precisely the issue which this acute critic had foreseen. On the other hand, he points out the iambic metres as those for which our language has the greatest aptitude, and recommends, as models for English rhythm, the recent versification of Lord Surrey: that is, as we shall immediately learn, he hails the introduction of blank verse, unquestionably the finest of all our metrical forms.

The other passage that has been alluded to, is one which is very well known. He relates, in it, how, visiting his pupil Lady Jane Grey in Leicestershire, he found her reading Plato in the original Greek, while her parents and their household were hunting in the park. The learning of this unfortunate lady, that of Queen Elizabeth herself, and the similar pains bestowed by Sir Thomas More on the instruction of his daughters, are striking examples of that zeal for the diffusion of education, and of education reaching up to a very high point, which actuated our countrymen so strongly during the sixteenth century.

While Ascham announced new views in education, another writer endeavoured, with much talent, to popularize sciences that had long been known and taught. Thomas Wilson, who, like so many other accomplished men of the time, transferred himself in mature life from the closet to the business of the state, published, in the middle of the century, "The Rule of Reason, containing the Art of Logic," and, a little afterwards, "The Art of Rhetoric." The couching of such treatises in the living tongue, was an innovation well worthy of being chronicled. The works themselves are good: the latter, in particular, having been published several years before Ascham's book, gives the author some right to be regarded as having been the earliest critical writer in the English language. One incident in his life is interesting. Emigrating to the continent, on Queen Mary's accession, and prosecuting his studies in Italy, he was apprehended by the Inquisition in Rome. On the accession of a new pope, the populace of the city broke open the prisons; and among those captives who escaped were Wilson, and the Scottish Reformer Craig.

## ENGLISH POETRY NON-DRAMATIC.

3. The Poetry which arose in England, during the reigns of Henry and his next successors, is, quite as much as the kinds of literature that have already been reviewed, important rather for its relations to other things than for its own merit. Yet it occupies a higher place than the prose, in our literary history. It exhibits, in temper, in manner, and in the nature of the topics selected, a very decisive contrast to the poetry of the times that were past: it bears in several points a close resemblance, and it furnished many materials and many forms, to the poetry of the energetic age that was soon to open.

The poetical names with which we require to form an acquaintance are very few: and the character of the works might be understood most easily if we were to arrange them in three groups, which would exhibit three dissimilar stages in the progress of taste and literary cultivation. In the first of these the chief was Skelton: the second was headed by Surrey; and the third, which shows deviation, perhaps, rather than progress, may be represented by Sackville. This classification should be remembered; though the order of the minor poets would make it inapplicable to a full history of the time.

The irregular pomp of chivalrous and allegoric pageantry, which accompanied us in our survey of the middle ages, had in the meantime vanished. Its last appearance was in the poem of Hawes, which, as already noticed, might have been referred, without impropriety, to the beginning of this period. It was succeeded, at first, by nothing higher than a Satirical kind of Poetry, in which features of actual life were depicted and anatomized, in a spirit caught from the prevalent restlessness and discontent. One of its effusions was Alexander Barklay's "Ship of Fools," translated from a continental work, but containing many additions illustrating the weaknesses and vices of English life and manners. It is a general moral satire, having very little that is either vigorous or amusing.

The poems, if they deserve to be so called, of the eccentric  
*d.* 1529. } John Skelton, are not only more interesting for their  
 closeness of application to historical incidents and persons, but are singularly though coarsely energetic, and do not altogether want glimmerings of poetical fancy. After having been the tutor of Henry the Eighth, he continued to write during the greater part of his pupil's reign, satirizing ecclesiastical and social abuses, attacking great men in the full flush of their power, and taking greater liberties with none than with the formidable Wolsey.

The point of his sarcasms is not infrequently lost, through obscure and aimless digressions and mystifications, which may plausibly be attributed to an occasional fit of caution. But the personalities are still oftener so undisguised, and the malicious bitterness is so provoking, that the impunity enjoyed by the libeller is a matter of surprise, although we make the fullest allowance for the caprice and inconsistency which at all times marked the administration of the king. There are not, in Skelton's works, very many verses that rise into the region of poetry: but his acuteness of observation, his keenness of humour, and his inexhaustible fertility of familiarly fanciful illustration, impart to his pieces an exceedingly curious and amusing grotesqueness. His command of words, too, is quite extraordinary. It not only gave good augury of the future development of the language, but showed that, by him at least, rapid progress had already been made. Although his task was much aided by his unscrupulous coinage of new and ridiculous terms, and by his frequent indentation of Latin words and lines into his English, yet the volubility with which he vents his acrid humour is truly surprising; and it is made the more so through the difficulties imposed on him by the kind of versification, which, seemingly invented by himself, he used oftener than any other. It consists of exceedingly short lines, many of which often rhyme together in close succession, and have double or triple endings.\*

## \* JOHN SKELTON.

*From "Colin Clout;" in which the abuses said to prevail in the Church are set forth in long complaints, put into the mouths of the people, and interspersed with very short and doubtful expressions of dissent by the poet.*

What trow ye they say more  
Of the bishops' lore?

How in matters they be raw:

They lumber forth the law,

And judge it as they will,

For other men's skill,

Expounding out their clauses.

And leave their own causes.

In their principal cure

They make but little sure,

And meddles very light

In the church's right.

\* \* \*

And whiles the heads do this,

The remnant is amiss

Of the clergy all,

Both great and small.

I wot not how they wark:

But thus the people cark.

\* \* \*

And all they lay

On you prelates, and say,

Ye do wrong and no right:

No matins at midnight!

Book and chalice gone quite!

Pluck away the leads

Over their heads;

And sell away their bells,

And all that they have else:

Thus the people tells;

Rails like rebels,

Rede shrewdly and spells:

How ye break the dead's wills:

Turn monasteries into water-mills;

4. A new era in the history of our poetry was unquestionably  
*b. ab. 1516.* } opened by the works of Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey.  
*d. 1547.* } In respect of poetical vigour and originality, this accom-  
 plished and ill-fated person was inferior to many poets who have  
 long been forgotten: but his foreign studies, and his refinement of  
 taste and feeling, concurred in enabling him to turn our poetical  
 literature into a track which had not yet been trodden.

The works through which Surrey's influence was exerted were of  
 two kinds: a collection of Sonnets and other poems of a Lyrical and  
 Amatory cast; and a Translation of the Second and Fourth Books of  
 the *Æneid*. All of them have this in common; that they are imi-  
 tations of Italian models, which, in our country, had not yet per-  
 haps been by any one studied exactly, and had certainly never yet  
 been imitated. His were the first Sonnets in our language; so that  
 he gave us a new form of poetical composition, and a form which,  
 used with zealous frequency by all the greatest poets of the Eliza-  
 bethan age, has not lost its hold from that time to this. Nor was  
 there less of novelty in the introduction of that refined and senti-  
 mental turn of thought, which breathes through all his lyrics, and  
 which was prompted by Petrarch and his other Italian masters.  
 The Italian studies of our poets of the fourteenth century, lay, as  
 we have learned, in other quarters: the Petrarchan subtilties and  
 conceits, and the Petrarchan tenderness and reflectiveness, were  
 alike ungenial to their rougher and more manly temperament.  
 Surrey was thus our usher into a poetical school, in which, for  
 much good and not a little harm, succeeding poets became both  
 pupils and teachers: and, it should also be remembered, his studies  
 in the poetry of Italy, as it existed before his own day, prepared the  
 way for introducing to the notice of his successors the greater  
 Italian works which were produced in his century. Surrey's fa-  
 miliarity with Petrarch's lyrics was a step towards Spenser's ac-  
 quaintance with the chivalrous epic of Tasso.

His *Æneid* conferred on us an obligation yet weightier. It  
 was not the first translation of a classical poem into English verse;  
 unless indeed we should think ourselves compelled to refuse the  
 name of English to the language used in Gawain Douglas's ver-  
 sion, from which, indeed, Surrey borrowed not a little. But it was  
 the first specimen of English Blank Verse: the unwonted metre  
 was handled, not very skilfully, indeed, yet with a success which

Of an abbey ye make a grange.  
 Your works, they say, are strange.

\* \* \*

What could the Turk do more,  
 With all his false lore?  
 Turk, Saracen, or Jew?  
 I report me to you.



instantly recommended it for adoption : and thus we have to thank Surrey for a form of versification, in which the noblest poetry of our tongue has since been couched, and but for which our drama and our epic would alike have been incomparably meaner and feebler and less animated. This was another of his importations from Italy, in which a similar metre appeared early in the century.\*

\* LORD SURREY.

I. A SONNET ON EARLY SUMMER.

The sweet season, that bud and bloom forth brings,  
 With green hath clad the hill and eke the vale :  
 The nightingale with feathers new she sings ;  
 The turtle to her mate hath told her tale.  
 Summer is come ; for every spray now springs.  
 The hart hath hung his old head on the pale ;  
 The buck in brake his winter-coat he flings ;  
 The fishes fleet with new repaired scale ;  
 The adder all her slough away she flings :  
 The swift swallow pursueth the flies small :  
 The busy bee her honey now she mings :<sup>1</sup>  
 Winter is worn that was the flower's bale.  
 And thus, I see, among these pleasant things  
 Each care decays ; and yet my sorrow springs.

---

II. FROM THE TRANSLATION OF THE ÆNEID, BOOK SECOND.

*The Ghost of Creusa vanishing from Æneas.*  
 Thus having said, she left me, all in tears  
 And minding much to speak ; but she was gone,  
 And subtly fled into the weightless air.  
 Thrice raught<sup>2</sup> I with mine arms to accol<sup>3</sup> her neck ;  
 Thrice did my hands' vain hold the image escape,  
 Like nimble winds and like the flying dream.  
 So, night spent out, return I to my feres ;<sup>4</sup>  
 And there, wond'ring, I find together swarmed  
 A new number of mates : mothers and men,  
 A rout exiled, a wretched multitude,  
 From each where flock together, prest<sup>5</sup> to pass,  
 With heart and goods, to whatsoever land  
 By sliding seas we listed them to lead.  
 And now rose Lucifer above the ridge  
 Of lusty Ide, and brought the dawning light.  
 The Greeks held the entries of the gates beset.  
 Of help there was no hope. Then gave I place,  
 Took up my sire, and hasted to the hill.

<sup>1</sup> Mingles.    <sup>2</sup> Reached.    <sup>3</sup> Embrace.    <sup>4</sup> Companions.    <sup>5</sup> Ready.



One is strongly tempted to pass over, in silence, on account of its real frivolousness, another claim which has been made on behalf of the noble poet. He is asserted to have been the writer who substituted, in our poetry, the counting of metres by syllables for the counting of them by accents. The true state of the case seems to be simply this. The accentual reckoning of measure was undoubtedly the oldest practice; and, in a strongly accented tongue like ours, it was the only one at all likely to be used in the ruder stages of literature. But the syllabic reckoning naturally and inevitably began to be taken more and more into account, as something like criticism arose: and the general substitution of the latter for the former took place the more readily, because of the tendency of our words to fall into iambs, which made the two reckonings to coincide not infrequently even in older times, and to coincide oftener and oftener as pronunciation became more fixed. Although the accentual counting is the safer and more convenient of the two for our reading of all our mediæval poetry, the other is applicable in a great number of instances, as early as Chaucer himself: it prevailed more and more widely afterwards: and it appears to be almost universally applicable to our later poetry of the fifteenth century, in both kingdoms of the island. That Surrey, guided by his foreign examples, followed the modern fashion more strictly than any before him, (though by no means always,) is probably true: and it cannot well be doubted that, in this as in other respects, his example had much effect in making the adoption of it universal. Just as certain is it, that the old tendency towards accentual scanning survived his time. It shows itself very strongly in the versification of the dramatists in the Elizabethan age, and is used by some of them with much freedom and excellent effect: and, further, its congeniality to the structure of our language is shown by the rich and varied melody which, through its re-introduction, has been attained by several poets of our own time.

5. Along with Surrey is commonly named the elder Sir Thomas Wyatt; a conjunction made proper not only by the friendship of the two, but by a general likeness in taste, sentiment, and poetical forms. But Wyatt, wanting his friend's merit as the originator of valuable changes, does not call for very particular notice by his greater vigour of style and keenness of observation. His poetry is more diversified in kind than that of his friend: he indulged freely in epigram and satire; and he attempted, much more frequently, versified translation from the Scriptures.

His and Surrey's versions of some of the Psalms are the most polished among many attempts of the sort made in their time, none

of them with much success. Not good, but not the worst of these, and better than the feeble modern rhymes by which it has been superseded, was the complete Translation of the Psalms, which bears the names of Sternhold and Hopkins. More than a hundred of the psalms were from the pen of these two; but there were also other translators. One of them was Whittingham, already noticed as the editor of the Geneva New Testament: and another was Norton, a lawyer, whom we shall immediately know as a dramatist, and who distinguished himself likewise as an able controversialist against Romanism. The whole collection was not published till 1562.

To the very close of our period belongs an extremely singular work, in which there was struck out, by the ingenuity of its designer, an idea poorly embodied by his assistants, but suggesting a great deal to the poets of the next age. It was entitled "A Mirror for Magistrates." It is a large collection of separate poems, celebrating personages, illustrious but unfortunate, who figure in the history of England. The intention was, that the series should extend from the Conquest to the end of the fifteenth century: but a small part only of the plan was executed in the earliest edition of the work; and it was not completed by all the additions which its popularity caused it to receive in the early part of Elizabeth's reign. The chief contributors to it in its oldest shape were Baldwyne, an ecclesiastic, and Ferrers, a lawyer; and among the others were Churchyard, a voluminous writer of verses then and long afterwards, and Phaer, who translated a part of the *Æneid*. The historical design, and the method of calling up each of the heroes to tell his own tale, furnished hints for a kind of poems written by several eminent men whom we shall encounter in a later age: and some poets yet greater, Spenser himself for one, have been traced in direct borrowing of particulars from the "Mirror." Otherwise none of the pieces contained in this ponderous mass are worthy of special notice, except the small portions written by the projector,

b. 1536. }  
d. 1603. } who was Thomas Sackville, oftener known as Lord Buckhurst. It was for the benefit of his children that their grandfather prompted the composition of Ascham's "Schoolmaster."

Planning the work in the middle of Mary's reign, Sackville threw over it a gloom which, as a poet has remarked, may naturally have been inspired by the scenes of terror amidst which he stood. He himself wrote only the "Induction," or prefatory poem, and the "Complaint of Henry duke of Buckingham," the friend and victim of Richard the Third, with which it was intended that the series should be closed. The Induction, which is very much more vigorous and poetical than the Complaint, derives its form, partly at least, from

the Italian poet Dante; while its cast of imagination is that which has become so familiar to us in the later poetry of the middle ages. It is a very remarkable poem, and has furnished hints to other poetical minds. It has a fine vein of solemn imagination, which is especially active in the conception of allegoric personages. Its plan is this. While the poet muses sadly, in the depth of winter, over nature's decay and man's infirmity, Sorrow appears to him in bodily form, and leads him into the world of the dead. Within the porch of the dread abode is seen a terrible group of shadowy figures, who are painted with great originality and force: there are, among them, Remorse, Dread, Revenge, Misery, Care, Sleep, Old-Age, Famine, War, and Death. These are the rulers and peoplers of the realm below. Then, when the dark lake of Acheron has been crossed, the ghosts of the mighty and unfortunate dead stalk in awful procession past the poet and his conductor. Here, evidently, a prelude is struck to some of the fullest strains which resound in Spenser's *Faerie Queene*.\*

\* THOMAS SACKVILLE.

*From "The Mirror for Magistrates;" published in 1559.*

I. FROM THE INDUCTION.

By him lay heavy SLEEP, the cousin of Death,  
 Flat on the ground, and still as any stone;  
 A very corpse, save yielding forth a breath:  
 Small keep<sup>1</sup> took he whom fortune frown'd on,  
 Or whom she lifted up into the throne  
 Of high renown: but, as a living death,  
 So dead-alive, of life he drew the breath.  
 The body's rest, the quiet of the heart,  
 The travail's ease, the still night's fere<sup>2</sup> was he,  
 And of our life on earth the better part:  
 Reiver<sup>3</sup> of sight, and yet in whom we see  
 Things oft that tide,<sup>4</sup> and oft that never be:  
 Without respect, esteeming equally  
 King Cræsus' pomp, and Irus' poverty.

II. FROM THE COMPLAINT OF BUCKINGHAM.

Midnight was come: and every vital thing  
 With sweet sound sleep their weary limbs did rest.  
 The beasts were still: the little birds that sing,  
 Now sweetly slept besides their mother's breast;  
 The old and young were shrouded in their nest.  
 The waters calm; the cruel seas did cease;  
 The woods, the fields, and all things, held their peace.

<sup>1</sup> Care.

<sup>2</sup> Companion.

<sup>3</sup> Bereaver.

<sup>4</sup> Betide.

## THE INFANCY OF THE ENGLISH DRAMA.

6. Our acquaintance with the English literature of this agitated time is not complete, until we have learned something as to the progress then made by the Drama. This department of poetry has been left almost unnoticed in the previous sections of our studies; because there did not then arise in it anything which possessed literary merit deserving of commemoration. But it had existed among us, as in every other country of Europe, from a very early date; and its history now calls for a hasty retrospect.

The dramatic exhibitions of the middle ages, if they did not take their origin in the church, were at all events speedily appropriated by the clergy. They had invariably a religious cast; many of them were composed by priests and monks; convents were very frequently the places in which they were performed; and ecclesiastics were to be found not seldom among the actors. These facts are differently commented on by different critics. Here it is enough for us to know, that, through the extreme popularity of the drama in those rude and primitive forms, the mass of the people, during many generations, probably owed to it the chief acquaintance which they were permitted to attain with biblical and legendary history.

All the old religious plays are by some writers described under the name of Mysteries. When they are narrowly examined, it is found that they may be distributed into two classes. The first, which was also the earliest, contained the Miracles or Miracle-Plays. These were founded on the narratives of the Bible or on the legends of the saints. To the second class belonged the Moralities, Morals, or Moral-Plays, which gradually arose out of the former by the increasing introduction of imaginary features. They were properly distinguished by taking abstract or allegorical beings as their personages; and by having their stories purposely so constructed as to convey ethical or religious lessons.

Some of the Miracle-Plays are of a very cumbrous size and texture, treating all the principal events of the Bible-history, from the Creation to the Day of Judgment. Such pieces were acted on festivals, the performance lasting for more days than one. There have been

The golden stars were whirled amid their race,  
And on the earth did laugh with twinkling light;  
When each thing, nestled in his resting-place,  
Forgot day's pain with pleasure of the night:  
The hare had not the greedy hounds in sight;  
The fearful deer of death stood not in doubt;  
The partridge dreamt not of the falcon's foot.



preserved three sets of them ; the oldest of which was probably put together in the middle of the thirteenth century, and was acted at Chester, every Whitsunday, for many generations, under the superintendence of the mayor of the city. In plays of both kinds, the prevalent tone is serious, and not infrequently very solemn. Not only, however, are the most sacred objects treated with undue freedom, but passages of the broadest and coarsest mirth are interspersed, apparently with the design of keeping alive the attention of the rude and uninstructed audience. The Moral-Plays had a character called Iniquity or the Vice, whose avowed function was buffoonery : he is alluded to by Shakspeare. Dramas of this sort, becoming common in England about the time of Henry the Sixth, were afterwards much more numerous than the Miracle-Plays, but without ever driving them entirely from the field. In one of the oldest and simplest of the Morals, the chief personage is called "Every-Man," and of course represents Mankind. Being summoned by Death, he in vain endeavours to obtain, on his long journey, the companionship of such friends as Kindred, Fellowship, Goods, and Good-Deeds : and he is, in the end, deserted by Knowledge, Strength, Discretion, Beauty, and Five-Wits, who had at first consented to attend him.

In the later middle ages, the distinction between the two kinds of works was often lost. Allegorical characters found their way into pieces which in their main outline were Miracle-Plays : and the Moral-Plays began to present personages who, whether historical or invented, had no emblematic significance.

7. We are now in a fit position for remarking the changes which took place after the beginning of the sixteenth century. The old plays, in both of their kinds, still kept their place : nor were they quite overthrown by the Reformation. For the Chester plays were publicly acted, in part at least, in the year 1577. Skelton, who has already become known to us, has recorded that in his younger days, he wrote Miracle-Plays ; and there were printed two Moralities of his, "Magnificence" and "The Necromancer." A more respectable contributor to the drama was the learned and pugnacious protestant Bishop Bale. Obligated to fly from England on the fall of his first patron Cromwell, he employed some part of the leisure forced on him by his exile, in the composition of several Miracle-Plays, all of which were intended for instructing the people in the errors and abuses of Popery and in the distinctive tenets of the Reformation. Their chief merit consists in their being almost entirely free from the levities which degrade other works of the kind : and they scarcely seem, now, to possess a literary excellence



justifying the satisfaction they gave to their venerable author, who has carefully enumerated them in his own list of his works.

There were, however, from the beginning of Henry the Eighth's reign, few dramas written unless in the mixed kind: and there has lately been discovered a work of Bale himself, which is the oldest extant specimen of the combination. It is a play on the history of "King John," in which the king himself, the pope, and other personages of the time, are associated with the old allegorical figures.

The Mixed-Plays, from that time downwards, are commonly known, not inaptly, by the name of Interludes. The most celebrated productions of this class and age were the plays of John Heywood, who, having published a series of epigrams, is usually, to distinguish him from a later dramatic writer, named "The Epigrammatist." His Interludes deal largely in ecclesiastical satire; and, not devoid of spirit or humour, they have very little either of skill in character-painting, or of interest in story. One of the earliest among them is "A Merry Play between the Pardoner and the Friar, the Curate and Neighbour Pratt," which has for its principal theme the frauds practised by the friars, and by the sellers of indulgences. In "The Four P's" the only plot is this. The Pardoner, the "Poticary," and the Palmer, lay a wager, to be gained by him who shall tell the greatest untruth. The first two recount long and marvellous tales, each of his own craft: and the third, who asserts in a single sentence that he never saw a woman lose patience, is adjudged by the Pedlar, the chosen umpire, to have fairly out-lied both of his rivals.

It is not a loss of time to remark this dramatic feebleness and these stale and weak impertinences. For Heywood's life extended to within twenty years of the time when Shakspeare must have begun to write. We are still, it should seem, at a hopeless distance from the great master. Fortunately we need not quit our period without having to mark several wide steps in advance; although it is necessary to anticipate a very few years of the next age, in order to bring all of these conveniently together.

8. About the middle of the century, the drama extricated itself completely from its ancient fetters. Both Comedy and Tragedy had then begun to exist, not in name only, but in a rude reality.

The author of our oldest known Comedy was Nicholas Udall, b. 1505.  
d. 1556. who was master of Eton School, and afterwards of Westminster, becoming, in both places, rather notorious for the severity of his punishments. He was a classical scholar of some note; and he published a school-book, called "Flowers of Latin Speaking," with other Latin works. He was in part the translator of

the Paraphrase of Erasmus on the New Testament, published under the patronage of Catherine Parr, the queen-dowager. He wrote several dramas, now lost, one of them being an English play called "Ezekias," which was acted before Elizabeth at Cambridge; while another was a Latin play "On the Papacy," probably intended to be enacted by his pupils. The same may have been the destination of the English Comedy, through which he holds his place in the general history of our literature. It is called "Ralph Roister Doister," from the name of its hero, a silly town-rake. The misadventures of this person are represented in it with much comic force. The story is well conducted; the situations are contrived dexterously; and the dialogue, though rough in diction, and couched in an irregular and unmusical kind of rhyme, abounds in spirit and humour. Its exact date is unknown; but it was certainly written before the year 1557.\*

\* NICHOLAS UDALL.

*From the Soliloquy with which his Comedy is opened, by Matthew Merrygreek, the knave of the piece.*

As long liveth the merry man (they say)  
 As doth the sorry man, and longer by a day :  
 Yet the grasshopper, for all his summer piping,  
 Starveth in winter with hungry griping :  
 Therefore another said saw doth men advise,  
 That they be together both merry and wise.  
 This lesson must I practise ; or else, ere long,  
 With me, Matthew Merrygreek, it will be wrong.  
 For know ye that, for all this merry note of mine,  
 He might appose me now, that should ask where I dine.  
 Sometime Lewis Loiterer biddeth me come near ;  
 Sometimes Watkin Waster maketh us good cheer ;  
 Sometimes I hang on Hankyn Hoddydoddy's sleeve ;  
 But this day on Ralph Roister Doister's, by his leave :  
 For, truly, of all men he is my chief banker,  
 Both for meat and money, and my chief sheet-anchor.

But now of Roister Doister somewhat to express,  
 That ye may esteem him after his worthiness ;  
 In these twenty towns, and seek them throughout,  
 Is not the like stock whereon to graft a lout.  
 All the day long is he facing and craking  
 Of his great acts in fighting and fray-making :  
 But when Roister Doister is put to the proof,  
 To keep the Queen's peace is more for his behoof.  
 Hold by his yea and nay, be his white son :  
 Praise and rouse him well, and ye have his heart won :  
 For so well liketh he his own fond fashions,  
 That he taketh pride of false commendations.  
 But such sport have I with him, as I would not leese,  
 Though I should be bound to live with bread and cheese.

Ten years afterwards, our earliest Tragedy was publicly played in the Inner Temple. It is known by two names, "Gorboduc" and "Ferrex and Porrex:" and it was probably the joint production of two authors, both of whom have already become known to us. The first three acts are said to have been written by Thomas Norton, the last two by Lord Buckhurst. Doubts have been expressed as to the authorship of the former: but they do not seem to rest on sufficient ground; and it would be wrong to reject hastily a claim to reputation, presented on behalf of one whom we

b. 1532. }  
 d. 1584. } know to have otherwise shown literary capability. Norton, accordingly, may be allowed to share, with his more celebrated coadjutor, the honour which the authors of "Gorboduc" receive on two several grounds. It was the earliest tragedy in our language: it was the first instance in which the recent experiment of blank verse was applied to dramatic composition. Its story is a chapter from ancient British history, presenting to us nothing but domestic hate and revenge, national bloodshed and calamity. The old king of Britain having in his lifetime shared his realm between his two sons, these strive for undivided sovereignty. The younger kills the elder, and is himself assassinated by the mother of both. The exasperated people exterminate the blood-stained race: and the country is left in desolation and anarchy. The incidents constituting the plot are very inartificially connected; and all the great events, instead of being directly represented in action, are intimated only in narrative, or in dumb shows, like those which we find in one or two early works of Shakspeare. Between the acts the story is moralized by a chorus. The dialogue is heavy, declamatory, and undramatic; and its chief merit, which is far from being small, lies in the stately tone of the language, no slight achievement in a first attempt, and in the solemnly reflective tone of the sentiments.\*

\* THOMAS SACKVILLE.

*From the Fourth Act of Gorboduc: Queen Videna's Lamentation for the death of her elder son.*

Why should I live, and linger forth my time  
 In longer life to double my distress?

Oh me, most woful wight! whom no mishap  
 Long ere this day could have bereav'd hence!

Might not these hands, by fortune or by fate,  
 Have pierced this breast, and life with iron reft!  
 Or, in this palace here, where I so long  
 Have spent my days, could not that happy hour  
 Once, once have hapt, in which these hugè frames  
 With death, by fall, might have oppress'd me

## THE LITERATURE OF SCOTLAND.

9. The causes which make our roll of eminent English names so short for this period, acted yet more strongly in Scotland; and the effect was augmented by other circumstances. The most thoughtful and best instructed men concentrated their attention, with constant earnestness, on the theological and ecclesiastical questions of the time: national dangers and aristocratic feuds distracted the country without ceasing; and Scottish literature, notwithstanding the poetic brilliancy which had recently adorned it, occupied really, in the beginning of this period, a position much less advanced than that which was the starting-point of England.

It is impossible to avoid believing, that literary progress was seriously impeded by the state of the Living Language. Radically identical with that which was spoken in the south, it had yet by this time assumed decisively the character of a separate dialect. It retained much more of the antique than the English did; because it had not received nearly so thorough a development in literature, and wanted especially the cultivation which would have been given by a free use of literary prose. It had also contracted, through the provincial isolation of the country, many peculiarities, which were neither old Saxon nor modern English: and these were now receiving continual accessions. Not only, therefore, was the Scottish dialect a less efficient literary organ than the English; but, likewise, those who wrote and spoke it were not well qualified, either for appreciating perfectly, or for dexterously transferring to their own speech, the improvements in style and diction which were going on so actively in England. If there was ever to arise in Scotland a vernacular literature worthy of the name, it could be

Or should not this most hard and cruel soil,  
So oft where I have pressed my wretched steps,  
Sometime had ruth of my accursèd life,  
To rend in twain, and swallow me therein!

So had my bones possessèd now, in peace,  
Their happy grave within the closèd ground;  
And greedy worms had gnawn this pinèd heart,  
Without my feeling pain. So should not now  
This living breast remain the ruthful tomb,  
Wherein my heart, yielden to death, is gravèd;  
Nor dreary thoughts, with pangs of pining grief,  
My doleful mind had not afflicted thus.

Oh, my beloved son! Oh, my sweet child!  
My dear Ferrex, my joy, my life's delight!  
Murdered with cruel death!



only through the adoption of the one or the other of two courses. The first of these would have consisted in a thorough cultivation, and enrichment, and systematizing of the native dialect; a process which would have placed the two kingdoms of the island in a literary relation to each other, not unlike that which subsists between Spain and Portugal. This was a mode neither desirable nor likely. The other was, the adoption of the English tongue as the vehicle of the standard literature of Scotland. This step, which probably must have been, sooner or later, the issue in any circumstances, was hastened by the union of the two crowns in the beginning of the seventeenth century. From that date, accordingly, the literature of England comprehends that of the sister-country as one of its branches.

The fact last noticed co-operates with others, in making it convenient that this should be the last period in which we take separate account of Scottish literature. It will be in our power to learn all that needs to be known, by looking forward very cursorily to the literary events that occurred in Scotland during the reign of Elizabeth, and the Scottish reign of James. Even with this extension of the period, our review of the northern literature may warrantably be brief. The importance of the phenomena, in the aspect in which they are here regarded, was far from being commensurate either to the momentous character of the attendant social changes, to the great ability of many of the literary men, or to the extensive erudition that was possessed by some of them.

10. In the annals of Scottish poetry during the sixteenth century, the distinguished poets of its opening years having already been spoken of, there occurs but one name that claims a memorial. The brightness which had lately shone out proved to be that of sunset: and the clouds of the moonless night that succeeded, dimmed and hid the few scattered stars.

b. bef. 1500. } Sir David Lindsay of the Mount, the youthful com-  
d. aft. 1567. } panion of James the Fifth, and afterwards his sagacious but unheeded adviser, is one of the most celebrated of Scotsmen, in his native country at least. His fame rests securely on the evidence of natural vigour which his works display, and on our knowledge of the influence which these had in promoting the ecclesiastical changes that began to be contemplated in his day. But very warm national partialities would be required, for enabling us to assign him a high rank as a poet. The chief characteristics of his writings are, their sagacious closeness of observation, their rough business-like common-sense, and their formidable and unscrupulous



vehemence of sarcastic invective. Living in a licentious court, and under a corrupt church, he attacks, with equal freedom, the follies and vices of the king and his comrades, and the abuses and weaknesses which deformed the ecclesiastical establishment.

His most elaborate work is called "The Satire of the Three Estates," a title which correctly describes it as aimed at a very wide range of victims. It is a drama of huge dimensions, and the earliest work of the kind that exists in the northern dialect. It is not so strictly a Moral-Play as an Interlude, bearing a considerable resemblance to the works of John Heywood. It abounds in such allegoric personages as King Humanity, Flattery, Falsehood, and Good Counsel, Chastity and Sensuality, Spirituality and Temporality, Diligence and Correction, the latter of whom hangs Theft in presence of the spectators. These figures, however, mix familiarly, in the scene, with characters representing directly the classes of the community. Among them is the Friar, who is Flattery in disguise; there is the Doctor, who delivers a pretty long sermon, answered in another, which is recited by Folly; there are the Bishop, Abbot, Parson, Prioress, and Pardoner; and the low comedy of the piece is played chiefly by the Shoemaker and Tailor, and the wives of these two. The date of the composition is conjectured to have been the year 1535, when it was acted at Cupar, in Fife, the native county of the author. The grossness of the humour, in many passages, is not surpassed by any thing in our old literature: and the satirical exposure of corruptions, though mainly made at the expense of the church, (for which, by that time, the rulers probably cared little,) cuts likewise so deeply into political questions, that the toleration of the exhibition by the government is almost as great a riddle as that which was shown to Skelton. It is needless to say that, in the controversial design of Lindsay's drama, we have a parallel to those pieces which were offered to uneducated audiences in England by the venerable Bishop Bale.

Our Scottish poet was certainly not endowed largely, either with poetic imagination or fine susceptibility. The allegorical inventions of the "Satire" have no great originality or beauty. His other large work, "The Monarchy, a Dialogue betwixt Experience and a Courtier," is a vast historical summary, with very little to relieve its dulness: and his "Squire Meldrum," in which a contemporary gentleman is promoted to be the hero of a metrical romance, is, besides its gratuitous indecency, conclusive as a proof of the author's inability to rise into the imaginative and romantic sphere. He is much stronger in those smaller pieces which open

up to him his favourite field of satire. The most poetical of these is "The Complaint of the Papingo," in which the king's parrot reads a lesson both to the court and to the clergy.

On the whole, Lindsay certainly wanted that creative power of genius, which would have entitled him to the name adopted, in the golden age of Scottish poetry, by the masters of the art. Dunbar and his contemporaries called themselves *Makers*: and this was also an English use of the term till the close of Elizabeth's reign. The poet of the Reformation in Scotland was not a poetic maker: he was only a man of great robustness, both of thought and will, who acted powerfully on a rude and fierce generation.

11. Down to the end of the last period in which we examined the intellectual progress of Scotland, we did not discover any application of the living tongue in the shape of original Prose to uses that can be called literary. This great step was now taken. Still, however, the most distinguished relics of Scottish prose that belong to the first half of the sixteenth century are not original. They were versions from the Latin by John Bellenden, archdeacon of Moray, who had also contemporary fame as a poet. He translated, with more neatness and variety of phrase than might have been expected, and with evidence of highly competent scholarship, the first Five Books of Livy, and the History of Scotland recently written by Boece. In the year 1548 there was printed, at Saint Andrews, a monument of Scottish prose which is still more curious. This piece, "The Complaint of Scotland," is a series of satirical reflections on the state of the country, enlivened by a great deal of quaint fancy; and it possesses much value for the antiquary, not only through its minute illustrations of manners and sentiment, but as abounding in characteristically provincial words and phrases. The promise of further progress is held out by the title of a later book, *The Chronicles of Scotland*, written by Robert Lindsay of Pitscottie, and extending from the accession of James the Second to the middle of the reign of Mary. But the literary pretensions of this prolix, credulous, and undigested record, are not higher than those of the poorest English chronicles of the middle ages. There is quoted from it, in one of the notes to *Marmion*, a passage where the writer relates, with implicit belief, the story of the apparition which, in the church of Linlithgow, warned James the Fourth before the fatal battle of Flodden.

The few other names which have to be selected from the annals of Scottish prose, belong to the celebrated men who acted in the great struggles of the Reformation: and the position which these

held, requires us to note the state of erudition in the country from the beginning of the century.

Scotland possessed, in this period, two men very eminent in the history of scholastic learning. Probably there was not then in England any speculative philosopher comparable to Major: there was certainly no classical scholar accomplished so variously and so exactly as Buchanan. Yet the general progress of Scottish erudition was slower than in the south; and its benefits were much less widely diffused. The most learned men were partly or altogether educated abroad.

The honour of having been the first Scotsman who wrote Latin tolerably, has been assigned to Hector Boece, who, about the year 1500, resigned an academical appointment in France to become principal of the college newly founded at Aberdeen. His most famous work, the "History of the Scots," is good, though not faultless, as a specimen of Latinity: the student of antiquity now remembers it only as a receptacle for the wildest of the fables which used to be authoritatively current as the earliest sections in our national annals.

Much inferior to Boece's writings in correctness of Latinity, indeed painfully clumsy and inelegant, are those of John *b. ab. 1470.* } Mair or Major, who, however, was one of the most *d. ab. 1550.* } vigorous thinkers of his time. Educated in England and Paris, and teaching for some time in France, he became the head of one of the colleges in Saint Andrews. His greatest works are metaphysical: and these, now utterly neglected, like others of their times and kind, fully vindicate the fame which he enjoyed, as one of the most acute and original of those who taught and defended, in its last stages, the scholastic philosophy of the middle ages. His "History of the Nation of the Scots" has little reputation among modern historical students: but, both there and elsewhere, he exhibits an independence and liberality of opinion, which, it has been believed, were not without influence on his most famous pupils. He was the teacher of Knox and Buchanan.

12. The first of these great names is not to be forgotten in the record of Scottish learning and talent. But the stern apostle of the northern Reformation had his mind fixed steadfastly on objects infinitely more sacred than either fame or knowledge: and *b. 1505.* } Knox's few published writings, although plainly indicating *d. 1572.* } both his force of character and his vigour of intellect, are chiefly valuable in their bearing on the questions of his time. The most elaborate of them, and the only one that can be described as anything more than a controversial or religious tract, is his "His-

tory of the Reformation of Religion within the Realm of Scotland." Those who now read this interesting chronicle, and who think that its language is peculiarly Scottish, may be amused by knowing, that Knox's style was reproached by one of his controversial opponents with being affectedly and unpatriotically English.

b. 1506. } George Buchanan, less deeply immersed in the vortex of  
d. 1582. } the times, and enjoying, in more than one stage of his life, the benefits of academical seclusion, found time to earn for himself a fame which can never be lost, unless the revival of learning in Europe should be followed by a total loss of all preceding memoirs of civilisation. He is admitted, by those who most keenly dislike his ecclesiastical and political opinions, to have been not only a man of eminent and versatile genius, but one of the finest and most correct classical scholars that ever appeared in Christendom. There have been Latinists more deeply versed in the philosophy of the language, and others more widely informed in the knowledge to which it is the clue; but hardly, perhaps, has there been, since the fall of Rome, any one who has written Latin with an excellence so complete and uniform. The chief of his Prose Works are his History of Scotland, and his Treatise on the Constitution of the Kingdom. The former, certainly the work of a partisan, is nevertheless historically important; the latter is remarkable for the manly independence of its opinions: and both of them tell their tale with an antique dignity and purity, which the Roman tongue has seldom been made to wear by a modern pen. The merit of his Latin Poems is yet higher. They are justly declared to unite, more than any other compositions of their kind, originality of matter with classic elegance of style. The most famous of them is his Translation of the Psalms; besides which, the list includes satires, didactic verses, and lyrics, one of these being the exquisite Ode on the month of May.

After the great name of Buchanan, a poor show is made by that of Bishop Lesley, the friend and defender of the unfortunate and misguided queen: yet he, too, was no mean scholar, and no bad Latin writer. Much more learned, probably, was Ninian Winzet, another advocate of the old creed, who had to seek refuge in the southern regions of the continent. A scholar more distinguished than either of them withdrew himself very soon from innovation and turmoil, and closed his days peacefully as a teacher in France. This was Florence Wilson, who translates his name into Volusenus in the Latin treatise, "On Tranquillity of Mind," which has preserved his name with high honour among those who take interest in classical studies.



In closing our separate record of northern literature, we must go forward a little to notice, as having been really eminent both for scholarship and talent, the energetic and restless Andrew Melville, the founder of the Presbyterian polity of the Scottish Church.

We must also mark how, the University of Saint Andrews having been established first of all, the other academical institutions of the country arose before the close of the sixteenth century. That of Glasgow dates from 1450; King's College in Aberdeen, from 1494; the University of Edinburgh was founded by King James in 1582, and Marischal College of Aberdeen in 1593. Still more important, perhaps, was the foundation which was now laid for a system of popular education in Scotland. There had long been, in the towns, grammar-schools where Latin was taught. The establishment of schools throughout the country was proposed by the Reformed clergy in 1560, the very year in which Parliament sanctioned the Reformation; and the principle was again laid down, a few years later, in the Second Book of Discipline. A considerable number of parochial schools were founded before King James's removal to England; and the setting down of a school in each parish, if it were possible, was ordered for the first time by an Act of the Privy Council, issued in 1616, and ratified by Parliament in 1633.



## CHAPTER III.

### THE AGE OF SPENSER, SHAKSPEARE, BACON, AND MILTON.

A. D. 1558—A. D. 1660.

Elizabeth,.....1558-1603.	The Commonwealth,.....1649-1653.
James I.,.....1603-1625.	The Protectorate,.....1653-1660.
Charles I.,.....1625-1649.	

#### SECTION FIRST : GENERAL VIEW OF THE PERIOD.

INTRODUCTION. 1. The Early Years of Elizabeth's Reign—Summary of their Literature.—2. Literary Greatness of the next Eighty Years—Division into Four Eras.—REIGN OF ELIZABETH FROM 1580. 3. Social Character of the Time—Its Religious Aspect—Effects on Literature.—4. Minor Elizabethan Writers—Their Literary Importance—The Three Great Names.—5. The Poetry of Spenser and Shakspeare—The Eloquence of Hooker.—REIGN OF JAMES. 6. Its Social and Literary Character—Distinguished Names—Bacon—Theologians—Poets.—THE TWO FOLLOWING ERAS. 7. Political and Ecclesiastical Changes—Effects on Thinking—Effects on Poetry—Milton's Youth.—8. Moral Aspect of the Time—Effects on Literature.—REIGN OF CHARLES. 9. Literary Events—Poetry—Eloquence—Theologians—Erudition.—THE COMMONWEALTH AND PROTECTORATE. 10. Literary Events—Poetry Checked—Modern Symptoms—Philosophy—Hobbes—Theology—Hall, Taylor, and Baxter.—11. Eloquence—Milton's Prose Works—Modern Symptoms—Style of the Old English Prose Writers.

#### INTRODUCTION.

1. THE era which is now to open on our view, is the most brilliant in the literary history of England. Thought, and imagination, and eloquence, combine to illuminate it with their most dazzling light ; its literature assumes the most various forms, and expatiates over the most distant regions of speculation and invention ; and its intellectual chiefs, while they breathe the spirit of modern knowledge and freedom, speak to us in tones which borrow an irregular stateliness from the chivalrous past. But the magnificent panorama does not meet the eye at once, as a scenic spectacle is displayed on the rising of the curtain. Standing at the point which we have now

reached, we must wait for the unveiling of its features, as we should watch while the mists of dawn, shrouding a beautiful landscape, melt away before the morning sun.

Our period covers a century. But the first quarter of it was very unproductive in all departments of literature: it was much more so than the age that had just closed. Of the poets, and philosophers, and theologians, who have immortalized the name of Queen Elizabeth, hardly one was born so much as five years before she ascended the throne.

In whatever direction we look during the first half of her reign, we discover an equal inaptitude, among men of letters, to build on the foundations that had been laid in the generation before. A respectable muster-roll of literary names could not be collected from those twenty or twenty-five years, unless it were to include a few of those writers who, properly belonging to the preceding time, continued to labour in this.

In poetry, the *Mirror of Magistrates* continued merely to heap up bad verses. The miscellaneous collection, called "*The Paradise of Dainty Devices*," contains hardly any pieces that are above mediocrity; and old Tusser's "*Five Hundred Points of Good Husbandry*," though Southey has thought it worthy of republication, teaches agriculture in verse, but does not aim at making it poetical. It is only towards the end of this interregnum of genius, that we reach something of poetical promise; and then we have only "*The Steel Glass*" of Gascoigne, a tolerable satirical poem in indifferent blank verse, with some smaller poems of his which are more lively.

The drama lingered in the state in which Udall and Sackville left it, till about the very time of Shakspeare's youth. Even its best writers deserve but slight commendation. Edwards, however, who hardly improved the art at all, was the best of the contributors to the "*Paradise*;" and Gascoigne the satirist, though merely a dramatic translator, not only used blank verse in tragic dialogue, but wrote our earliest prose comedy. John Still, who in maturer age became a bishop, composed the best of the original comedies, "*Gammer Gurton's Needle*;" which, however, is in every way inferior to "*Roister Doister*."

In English prose, again, the time was equally barren. Its reputation is redeemed by one great event only; the appearance of the Bishops' Bible, which will soon be commemorated more particularly. Of original writers, it possessed none that are generally remembered, except the venerable Bishop Jewell. But the "*Apolo-  
gy for the Church of England*," the most celebrated work of this learned, able, and pious man, was written in Latin. We must not,

however, forget Stow's unpretending *Chronicles of England and Survey of London*; and the readers of Shakspeare may be reminded, that to these obscure years belong the plain but useful historical works of Hall and Holinshed, of which he made so free use.

Learning in the ancient tongues, which had received a check during the ecclesiastical troubles, was now allowed to resume its course. The oriental languages were studied sufficiently to give great aid to the scriptural critics and translators. But classical knowledge, which is said to have declined almost everywhere in the latter half of the century, produced in England no very valuable fruits. Its first effect was, the setting afloat a shoal of metrical translations from the Latin poets, with some from the Greek. These were very far from being useless. They not only diffused a taste for the antique, but served as convenient manuals for some of the less instructed among the later poets; Shakspeare himself being, in all likelihood, not slow to appropriate their treasures. But, as specimens either of style or of poetry, they are, one and all, exceedingly bad.

2. The writers being thus finally disposed of, who appeared in the first half of Elizabeth's long reign, our inquiries must dwell very particularly on those by whom they were succeeded. The immense and invaluable series of literary works, which embellished the period now in question, might be regarded as beginning with Spenser's earliest poem, which was published in the year 1579.

"There never was, anywhere, anything like the sixty or seventy years that elapsed from the middle of Elizabeth's reign to the Restoration. In point of real force and originality of genius, neither the age of Pericles, nor the age of Augustus, nor the times of Leo the Tenth, or of Louis the Fourteenth, can come at all into comparison. For, in that short period, we shall find the names of almost all the very great men that this nation has ever produced; the names of Shakspeare, and Bacon, and Spenser, and Sidney, of Raleigh, and Hooker, and Taylor, of Napier, and Milton, and Cudworth, and Hobbes, and many others; men, all of them, not merely of great talents and accomplishments, but of vast compass and reach of understanding, and of minds truly creative and original; not men who perfected art by the delicacy of their taste, or digested knowledge by the justness of their reasonings; but men who made vast and substantial additions to the materials upon which taste and reason must hereafter be employed, and who enlarged, to an incredible and unparalleled extent, both the stores and the resources of the human faculties." \*

\* Lord Jeffrey: *Contributions to the Edinburgh Review*; Vol. II.

No age in our literature deserves to be studied so deeply, as that which, in respect of its innate power of thought and invention, is thus justly ranked above the most brilliant eras of ancient Greece and Rome, of modern Italy and France. Nor, when we survey that energetic period from its beginning to its close, do we discover any point at which its activity can be said, with truth, to have either ceased or flagged. Impediments thrown up in one channel of thought, served only to drive the current forward with redoubled impetuosity in another. Some of the highest minds, indeed, lingered on earth till the bounds of their time were past, casting the shadow of their strength on the feebler age that followed. Allied, likewise, so closely, by the originality and vigour which was common to all, the leaders of our golden age of letters were linked together not less firmly by the common spirit and tone of their works. Let us look in what direction we will ; to theology or philosophy, to the drama, or the narrative poem, or the ever-shifting shapes of the lyric : everywhere there meets us, in the midst of boundless dissimilitude imprinted by individual genius and temperament, a similarity of general characteristics as striking as if it had been transmitted with the blood. The great men of that great age, separated from their predecessors by a gap in time, and distinguished from them yet more clearly by their intellectual character, stand aloof, quite as decidedly, from those degenerate successors, amidst whom a few of them moved in the latest stages of their course. Taylor, and Hall, and Baxter, are pupils who learned new lessons in the school which had nurtured Hooker ; Hobbes might be called, without injustice to either party, the philosophical step-son and heir of Bacon ; and Milton is the last survivor of the princely race, whose intellectual founders were Spenser and Shakspeare.

While the period thus spoken of, reaching from about 1580 to 1660, must be treated as one, it will not be supposed to have been void of changes. Eighty years could not have passed along, in one of the most actively thinking ages of the world, without evolving much that was novel ; still less could this have happened in a time when revolutions, political and religious, were bursting out like volcanoes, and when all the relations of society were, more than once, utterly metamorphosed.

Accordingly, we cannot thoroughly understand the intellectual phenomena that arose, unless we begin our scrutiny by regarding them in their order of succession ; and the spirit which prevailed in public affairs communicated itself sufficiently to literature, to make the changes of dynasty represent, in a loose way, the successive changes which took place in the realm of letters. We will



hastily examine, one after another, the latter half of Elizabeth's reign, the reign of James, that of Charles, and the few years of the Commonwealth and Protectorate.

### THE REIGN OF ELIZABETH FROM 1580.

3. It is not easy to detect all the impulses, which made the last generation of the sixteenth century so strong in itself, and capable of bequeathing so much strength to those who took up its inheritance.

The chivalrous temper of the middle ages was not yet extinct. But it had begun to seek for more useful fields of exercise when it animated the half-piratical adventurers, who roamed the seas of the west in search of new worlds, and fame, and gold; and it burned with a purer flame in Queen Elizabeth's foreign wars, blazing up with a mingled burst of patriotic and religious zeal when the shores of England were threatened by the terrible fleet of the Spaniards. There was an expanding elasticity, a growing freedom, both of thought and of action; a freedom which was very imperfect according to modern views, but which still was much wider than any that had yet, unless for very short intervals, been enjoyed by the nation. There was an increasing national prosperity, with a corresponding advance of comfort and refinement throughout all ranks of society. Ancient literature became directly familiar to a few, and at second hand to very many; a knowledge of such science as Europe then possessed began to be zealously desired by educated men; and there was diffused, widely, an acquaintance with the history and relations of other countries.

Mightier than all these forces in outward show, and strong in its slow and silent working on the hearts of the nation, was the influence exerted by the Reformation, which, now completed, had moulded the polity of the English Church into the form it was destined to retain. More gentle than the gales that blew from the new-found islands of the ocean, was the spirit which pure religion breathed, or should have breathed, over the face of society; and tenfold more welcome was, or should have been, the voice that announced freedom of spiritual thought, than the loudest blast with which a herald's trumpet ever ushered in a proclamation of civil liberty. It cannot be doubted that the ecclesiastical revolution, which was so peaceably effected by Elizabeth, was felt, by the nation at large, like the removal of an oppressive weight. But we must not allow ourselves to imagine, either that perfect religious freedom was now gained; or that the old faith vanished from the



land as a snow-wreath melts before the warmth of spring; or that the purification of doctrine and discipline transformed the hearts and minds of a whole people with the suddenness of a sorcerer's charm.

In the deliverance out of the ancient prison-house, the captives carried with them some of the ancient fetters. This took place partly because the strong-willed sovereign so decreed it, partly because it could not well have been otherwise. If Elizabeth sternly suppressed the dissent of her Catholic subjects, she prevented, with a hand equally heavy, all departure of Protestants from the ecclesiastical polity which she had established; and, in church as in state, her prudent mixture of forbearance with severity checked the growth, as well as curbed the manifestation, of discontents which were to be aggravated into destructive violence by the bigotry and folly of her successors. In regard to the matters in which we are immediately interested, the great queen's policy, and the state of doctrine during the greater part of her time, concurred in having this effect; that puritanism has not in any shape a place in literary history till we reach the reign of James. Literature was affected in a different way by the somewhat doubtful state of opinion and feeling which is traceable among the people. The cautious and moderate character of the ecclesiastical changes, while it facilitated the gradual absorption of the whole community into the bosom of the reformed church, saved all men from that abrupt breaking up of settled associations, and that severe antagonism of feeling between the old and the new, which another course of events had caused in Scotland. It is certain that the effects which this state of things produced in literature, and most of all in poetry, were, in the meantime at least, highly beneficial. The poets, speaking to the nation, and themselves inhaling its spirit, had thus at their command a rich fund of ideas and sentiments, passing in an uninterrupted series from the past into the present. The picturesqueness of the middle ages, and their chivalry, and their superstitions, still awakened in every breast an echo more or less loud and clear; and the newly revealed spiritual world, which was gradually diffusing its atmosphere all around, communicated, even to those who were unconscious whence the prompting came, enlarged vigour and independence of thought, and novel and elevating objects of aspiration. Nor was the morality of the time, whatever may be our ethical judgment on it, less favourable to the progress of literary culture. It was neither lofty nor ascetic, but neither was it generally impure: it was, like the manners, seldom refined; but, like these, it was coarse in tone rather than bad in essence. It was better than that which had prevailed in

the early part of the century ; and, unfortunately, that of the time which succeeded was much worse.

It is a question which tempts to wide conjectures, what the results might have been if the social and ecclesiastical relations of England had been guided into another channel ; what might have happened, in the progress of literature or in that of the nation, if, for example, the people had been trained in such a school as that, of which the short reign of Edward the Sixth held out the promise ; if they had been taught by a press subjected to no restrictions, and guided by a clergy from whom puritanism inherited its doctrines and its spirit. Probably Charles the First would not have been dethroned ; but probably, likewise, neither Shakspeare nor Spenser would have written.

4. The adventurers who flocked into the tourney-field of letters, during the last half of Elizabeth's reign, are a host whom it would take hours to muster. Their writings range over the whole circle of knowledge and invention, and give anticipations, both in prose and in verse, of almost every variety which literature has since displayed ; and, although a few only of the vast number of works have gained wide and enduring celebrity, there are among them a good many, which, if seldom read, are known sufficiently to keep alive the names of the authors.

The minor writers of that age deserve much greater honour than they are wont to receive. The labours of several of them are really not less important than those of their most celebrated contemporaries, as facts in the intellectual history of our nation. In some departments, indeed, the small men worked more signal improvements than the great ones ; and, everywhere, the credit which is usually monopolized by the one class, should in justice be shared with the other. Were it not for the drama and the chivalrous epic, it might be said that the less distinguished authors of that generation were the earliest builders of the structure of English literature. Others coming after them reared the edifice higher, and decked it with richer ornament : but the rustic basement is as essential a part of the pile, as are the porticos and columns that support its roof. Had it not been for the experiments which were tried by such men, and the promptings and warnings which their example furnished, their successors could not have effected what they did.

Further, the social and intellectual character of the last generation in the sixteenth century descended, in great part, to the race that followed it. Those to whom the men of letters addressed themselves in the reign of James, could not have been qualified to respond to their appeals, if they had not been the sons of those

who had so strongly acted and thought and felt in the time of Elizabeth.

Therefore, even although the most distinguished names of that earlier time had been wanting, it would not be either unjust or incorrect to speak, as we often do, of the whole mass of our literature down to the Commonwealth, as belonging to the Elizabethan Age. Yet to her time belong strictly no more than three of the great men of our period. Its intellectual chiefs were Spenser, Shakspeare, and Hooker: and, it must now be said on the other side, if these had stood literally alone, they would suffice to vindicate for the reign of the masculine queen its right to be described as the most illustrious era in our intellectual annals.

When we have read the names of those three celebrated men, and have noted the time in which they lived, we know when it was that English poetry rose to its culminating point, in style as well as in matter; and we know also when it was that English eloquence, though still imperfect in language, spoke, from one mouth at least, with a majesty which it has never since surpassed.

That the poetical art should be developed more quickly than other departments of literature, is a circumstance which, after our study of earlier periods, we should be quite prepared to expect. The nation grows like the man: it nourishes imagination and passion before reflective thought is matured; and it creates and appreciates poetry, while history seems uninteresting, and philosophy is unknown. All languages, also, are fully competent for expressing the complex manifestations of fancy and emotion, long before they become fit for precisely denoting general truths, or recording correctly the results of analysis; and, yet further, all of them can move freely when supported by the leading-strings of verse, although their gait might still be uncertain and awkward if, prose being adopted, the guiding hand were taken away. Here, indeed, it should be remembered, that, in these, the latest stages in the development of the English tongue, a high degree of excellence in prose style followed, more quickly than is usual, on the perfecting of the language for metrical uses.

5. Our two immortal poets must be studied more closely hereafter: a few points only may here conveniently be premised.

The Faerie Queene of Spenser, and the Dramas of Shakspeare, are possessions for all time: yet they wear, strikingly and characteristically, features imprinted on them by the age in which they were conceived. Their inventors stood on a frontier-ground, which, while it lay within the bounds of the new moral kingdom, and commanded a prospect over its nearest scenes of regular and culti-

vated beauty, yet also enabled them to look backward on the past, and to catch vivid glimpses of its wild magnificence. Both of them were possessed by thoughts, and feelings, and images, which could not have arisen if they had lived either a century later or as much earlier. Yet the attention of the two was chiefly fixed on different objects: and very dissimilar were their views of man and history, of nature and art. Spenser's eye dwelt, with fond and untiring admiration, on the gorgeous scenery which covered the elfin-land of knight-hood and romance: present realities passed before him unseen, or were remembered only to be woven insensibly into the gossamer-tissue of fantasy; and, lost in his life-long dream of antique grandeur and ideal loveliness, he was blind to all the phenomena of that renovated world, which was rising around him out of the ancient chaos. He was the Last Minstrel of Chivalry: he was greater, beyond comparison, than the greatest of his forerunners; but still he was no more than the modern poet of the remote past. Shakespeare was emphatically the poet of the present and the future. He knew antiquity well, and meditated on it deeply, as he did on all things: the historical glories of England received an added majesty from his hands; and the heroes of Greece and Rome rose to imaginative life at his bidding. But to him the middle ages, not less than the classical times, were unveiled in their true light: he saw in them fallen fragments on which men were to build anew, august scenes of desolation whose ruin taught men to work more wisely: he painted them as the accessory features and distant landscape of colossal pictures, in whose foreground stood figures soaring beyond the limits of their place; figures instinct with the spirit of the time in which the poet lived, yet lifted out of and above their time by the impulse of potent genius, prescient of momentous truths that still lay slumbering in the bosom of futurity.

By the side of the Poetry, in which those celebrated men took the lead, the contemporary Prose shows poorly, with the one great exception. For, in respect of style, Hooker really stands almost alone in his own time, and might be said to do so though he were compared with his successors. His majestic sweep of thought has its parallels: his command of illustration was often surpassed: both as a thinker and as an expounder of thought, this distinguished man is but one among several. But he used the words of his native tongue with a skill and judgment, and wove them into sentences with a harmonious fulness and a frequent approach to complete symmetry of structure, which are alike above the-character of English style as it was next to be developed, and marvellous when



we remember that he may fairly be held to have been the first in our illustrious train of great prose writers.

Hooker's "Ecclesiastical Polity" was printed in the year 1594. Sir Philip Sidney's "Arcadia" had been written before 1587: and in 1596 appeared Bacon's "Essays" and the "View of Ireland" by the poet Spenser. But none of these are comparable in style to the roll of Hooker's sentences. Sidney is loose and clumsy in construction; Bacon is stiff in his forms, and somewhat affectedly antique in diction: and Spenser's prose is in all respects vigorous rather than polished. But, the value of the matter of the books being at present out of question, none of these entitle us to do more than assert, that, before the close of the sixteenth century, there were a few men who wrote English prose very much more regularly and easily than it had been written before, and that their style is less cumbrous and pedantic than that of the most famous writers who followed.

In a word, the application of the English language to Metrical composition may be held to have been perfected by Shakspeare. It would be hard to discover any improvements which, in this use, it has received since his time. The moulding of it into Prose forms had proceeded so far, that, though its development had here stopped, it would have been fully adequate for expressing all varieties of thought with perfect perspicuity and great vigour. But there was still much to be done, before English Prose could satisfy the requirements of an exactly critical taste. We must remember the real imperfections of style, both in our study of these writers, and when we pass to those of the next generation; because we are in constant danger of being blinded to them, by the fascination of the eloquence displayed in the books in which they are contained.

#### THE REIGN OF JAMES THE FIRST.

6. The reign of Elizabeth, as we have learned, gave the key-note to all the literature of the next sixty years. Yet, amidst the general harmony with which the strains succeed each other, there break in, not infrequently, clanging discords.

The literary works which belong to this succeeding part of the period, not only were much more numerous, but really stand, if they are regarded in the mass, higher than those which closed the sixteenth century. Spenser was unimitated, and Shakspeare inimitable: but the drama itself, which, in this generation as in the last, monopolized nearly all the best endowed minds, received new and interesting developments; and other kinds of poetry were enriched



beyond precedent. Prose writing, on the other hand, blossomed into a harvest of eloquence, unexampled alike in its irregular vigour and in its rich amount.

Under the rule of James, learning was exact enough to do good service both in classics and theology: and it became so fashionable, as to infect English writing with a prevalent eruption of pedantic affectations. The chivalrous temper was rapidly on the wane: few men were actuated by it; and those who were so, found themselves out of place. The last survivor of Elizabeth's devoted knights died on the scaffold: and the chancellor of the kingdom, the greatest thinker of his day, was found guilty of corruption. In the palace and its precincts, the old coarseness had begun to pass into positive licentiousness: and a moral degeneracy, propagated yet more widely, began to shed its poison on the lighter kinds of literature. The church possessed many good and able men; but events of various kinds were bringing dissent to the surface. The civil polity stood apparently firm; but it was really undermined already, and about to totter and fall.

A few names, distinctively belonging to James's reign, may serve to illustrate its intellectual characteristics. Bacon, the great pilot of modern science, then gave to the world the rudiments of his philosophy: the venerable Camden was perhaps too learned to be accepted as a fair representative of the erudition of his day. Bishop Hall, then beginning to be eminent, exemplifies, favourably, not only the eloquence and talent of the clergy, but the beginnings of resistance to the proceedings and tendencies by which the Church was soon to be overthrown. The drama was headed by Ben Jonson, a semi-classic in taste, and honourably severe in morals; and by Beaumont and Fletcher, luxuriating in irregularity of dramatic forms, and heralding the licentiousness which soon corrupted the art generally. From the crowd of poets who filled other fields, we may single out Donne, both as very distinguished for native genius, and as having been the main instrument in the introduction of fantastic eccentricities into poetical composition.

#### THE REIGN OF CHARLES THE FIRST: THE COMMONWEALTH AND PROTECTORATE.

7. The public events which took place in the last two sections of our period run gradually into each other, so as to make the successive stages not distinctly separable. Charles the First ceased to reign, long before he laid down his head on the block; and, while he still occupied the throne, the measures of his chief advisers, urged with impotent imprudence, and aggravated by royal perfidy,

had already separated the nation into two great parties, opposed to each other both politically and ecclesiastically. Strafford alarmed patriotic statesmen into rebellion : Laud goaded conscientious religionists into secession from the Church.

The battle of sects and factions began, at the earliest opportunity, to be fought with the pen as well as the sword : and many of the ablest men on both sides spent their strength, and forfeited their claim to enduring reputation, in ceaseless and now-forgotten controversies. But the momentous questions which were then openly agitated, for the first time in the modern history of England, produced not a little fruit that was destined to be lasting. Sound constitutional principles, hitherto but insinuated by any who nourished them, were broadly avowed and convincingly taught, not in parliament only and in the war of pamphlets, but in histories and dissertations designed, and some of them not unworthy, to descend to posterity. Dissenters from the church, able at length both to acknowledge their convictions and to defend them, wrote and spoke with a force of reasoning and of eloquence, which speedily converted the nickname of Puritans into an epithet which, though it might imply dislike, yet no longer justified contempt. Nor, while the struggle lasted, did the hierarchy or the throne want champions brave or pious, learned in books or skilful in argument. On both sides, and in all the chief sections into which the successive changes parted the nation, there emerged an admirable strength of intellect and a wide fertility of resources : the minds of men caught an enthusiastic fervour from the fiery atmosphere in which they breathed ; and some of the most eloquent writings in the English language had their birth, or the prompting that first inspired their authors, amidst the convulsions of the Civil War, or in the strangely perplexed era of the Commonwealth and the Protectorate.

What has now been said, however, bears almost wholly on prose literature. Poetry was, and could not but be, differently affected. The storm which desolates a nation divided against itself, furnishes themes which, unfortunately for the credit of human nature, are peculiarly powerful instruments in the hands of poets who look back on the tempest after it has blown over : but its real hatefulness appears sufficiently from this fact alone, that it withers all poetic flowers that attempt to bud while it rages in the air. English poetry drooped, by necessity, ever after the breaking out of the political troubles. Nor was the serious temper which afterwards, for a while, ruled the majority of the nation, calculated to form a good school for the nurture of a new race of poets. It was too keenly exclusive, too fiercely controversial, too gloomily ascetic, to leave free

room for the play of ideal fancy and benignant sympathy. That stern era did, no doubt, mould into an awful thoughtfulness, which might not otherwise have dwelt on it, the mind of one man gifted with extraordinary genius. But, although Milton, in all likelihood, would not have conceived the "Paradise Lost" had he not lived and acted and felt with the Puritans and Vane and Cromwell, we may warrantably believe that he could not have made his poem the consummate work of art which it is, if his youthful fancy had not been fed, and his early studies completed, amidst the imaginative license and the courtly pomp that adorned the last days of the hierarchy and the monarchy.

8. This train of reflection, however, leads us to remember, that the poets of King Charles's time were very far from being so pure or elevated in sentiment, as to make the gradual silencing of them a matter of unmixed regret. The poetry of a generation, regarded in the mass, is, of all its intellectual efforts, by far the quickest, as well as the most correct, in reflecting the aspects of the world without. In the readiness and closeness, indeed, with which it repeats the lights and shades that fall on it from the face of society, it exceeds other kinds of literature quite as far, as the chemically prepared plate of the photograph exceeds a common mirror in its repetition of the forms and hues of the objects that are presented to it. Above all, this is true; that the Muses have always been dangerously susceptible to impressions from the moral climate of the regions in which they are placed.

Now, it has been hinted already, that the roughness of speech and manners which in Elizabeth's time prevailed to the last, was followed, in the next reign, by a real coarseness and lowness of sentiment and principle. This grew worse and worse under James's son. The morality of those classes of society with which most of the poets associated, and in which their audiences were sought, underwent a rapid and lamentable declension from the time when the antagonism between the national parties was fairly established. Another issue might have been hoped for. The refined taste and studious habits of the unfortunate king were not, seemingly, a surer presage of royal countenance to literary genius, than his devout meditateness, and his severe strictness of private conduct, were of encouragement to literature in teaching purity and goodness. But, most unfortunately for all men, the morality of the cavaliers took, in spite of every obstacle, a course precisely parallel to that of the policy which had been adopted by the statesmen who ruled them. Just as every fresh demand made by the parliament on behalf of the people had brought forth some wider assertion of

the prerogative of the crown; not otherwise, throughout the war, with every step which the puritans and parliamentarians took towards purification of doctrine and amendment of life and manners, there arose, among the royalists, a new access of sneering at hypocritical pretensions, an increase of zeal in the profession of religious indifference, and a waxing boldness in proclaiming the comfortable creed which declared profligacy to be the necessary qualification of a gentleman. The good men of the party (and there were many such) resisted and grieved in vain. If it was a bitter thing for the patriotic Falkland to die for a king against whose acts he had indignantly protested, it must have been bitter, doubly bitter, for truly pious men, like Hall, and Taylor, and Usher, to find themselves preaching truth and goodness to hearers, by whom truth and goodness were equally set at nought.

#### THE REIGN OF CHARLES THE FIRST.

9. It remains, still, that we learn a few of the principal literary names, and one or two of the most prominent literary characteristics, that may be referred to the two eras which, in their social aspects, have now been considered together. The changes may be indicated most clearly if they are arranged in two successive stages; and these are naturally marked off from each other by the successive changes of government. Yet neither the men nor the facts can be kept entirely separate.

The time of Charles's rule was, naturally, more variously prolific than that which followed.

In Poetry it was especially so. The quantity of beautiful verse which it has bequeathed to us is wonderful; the forms in which fancy disported itself embrace almost all that are possible, except some of the most arduous; the tone of sentiment shifted from the gravest to the gayest, from rapturous devotion to playful levity, from tragic tearfulness to fantastic wit, from moral solemnity to indecent licence; the themes ranged from historical fact to invented fable, from the romantic story to the scene of domestic life, from momentous truths to puerile trifles. No great poet, however, appears in the crowd; and it is enough to say, that among them were most of those whose sonnets, and odes, and other lyrics, will call for some notice hereafter. The Drama, though now no longer the chief walk of poetic art, was still rich in genius; its most distinguished names being those of Massinger, Ford, and Shirley. But here the aristocratic depravity had taken deeper root than anywhere else: it was a blessing to the public that, soon after the



breaking out of the war, the theatres were shut, and their poets left to idleness or repentance.

The Prose writers of the reign are worthily represented by two of the clergy. Hall was in the full maturity of his fame and usefulness; and it is touching to see him, who had urgently remonstrated against the innovations of Laud, now combating generously for the church, and punished because he refused to separate himself from her communion. Jeremy Taylor, also, now begins his career of eloquence and vicissitude; as yet suffering little in the growing tumult, but destined to pass through a course of troubles hardly less severe than those of his elder contemporary. That the age was not without much erudition, is proved by his name, as well as by several others. But the greatest among all these is that of the universally learned Selden: and his position is in several respects illustrative of the character of his time, more than one of these indeed being common to him with Camden. Both were laymen, as were one or two others of the most eminent scholars of this half century; a point deserving to be remembered, as denoting the commencement of a social state widely different from the mediæval. Both, again, not only were variously learned, but busied themselves, besides the ancient studies in which they were so eminent, with the antiquities of their native country; while Selden's most successful literary labours were of a peculiarly practical cast. He, too, by far the most deeply read scholar of his age, found time and will to be a statesman and a lawyer. He sat in parliament; and it was his own fault that he was not raised to the woolsack. In quitting this eventful reign, we may note, as its chief fact in philosophy, that Hobbes was then preparing for his ambitious and diversified tasks, and publishing some of his earliest writings.

#### THE COMMONWEALTH AND PROTECTORATE.

10. The Commonwealth and Protectorate, extending over no more than eleven years, made, for literature not less than for church and state, an epoch which would be very wrongly judged of, if its importance were to be reckoned as proportional to its brief duration. The political republic worked strongly on the republic of letters; but the impulse expended itself within a narrow circle, and produced total inaction in several quarters by coming into collision with the older tendencies.

The Old English Drama was extinct. Poetry of other kinds had fewer votaries: most of the poets who had appeared in the courtly times were already dead; and the room they left vacant was filled



up very thinly. The younger men were affected, powerfully and in most instances permanently, by the stern seriousness of the time: when the overstretched cord suddenly snapped at the Restoration, the moral looseness which infected poetical sentiment showed itself chiefly in writers who, by one cause or another, had been placed beyond the puritanical influence. The literary aspect of poetry exhibited several very interesting symptoms, marking the time emphatically as one of transition from the old to the new. Cowley now closed, perhaps with greater brilliancy than it had ever possessed, the eccentric and artificial school of which Donne has been recorded as the founder: and Milton, though labouring vehemently, in the meanwhile, among those who strove to guide the social tempest, was thus really undergoing the last steps of that mental discipline which was soon to qualify him for standing forth, in dignified solitude, as the last and all but the greatest of our poetical ancients. At the very same time, the approach of a modern era was indicated, both by the frivolity of sentiment, and by the ease of versification and style, which prevailed in the poems of Waller. The works of Butler and Dryden belong, it is true, to the age that followed. But these were the days when the former was marking the victims who were afterwards to writhe under his satiric lash: and the latter was already beginning his devious and doubtful course, by offering his homage at the feet of the Protector.

Philosophy could command little attention; but philosophers were neither idle nor silent. Hobbes, fortified by exile in his uncompromising championship of royal supremacy, sounded his first blasts of defiance to constitutional freedom and ecclesiastical independence. In the cloisters of Cambridge, on the other hand, two deep though mystical thinkers, undistracted by the din which was heard around, grappled quietly with the most arduous problems of philosophic thought. Henry More expounded those Platonic dreams of his, which were not altogether dreams; while Cudworth began to vindicate belief in the being of the Almighty, and in the essential foundations of moral distinctions.

Theology, the highest of all sciences, and that which then directed both opinion and practice among the leading men of England, was cultivated with general alacrity, in many and diverse departments, and with great variety both of feeling and thought. Among its teachers were several of our great prose writers. The venerable Hall, towards the end of the period, closed his honourable life, persecuted and poor, but cheerful and courageous: Jeremy Taylor, like the non-conformists in his own later days, toiled the more vigorously at his desk when the pulpit was shut against him. The

Puritans, who were now the ruling power in the state, became also a power in literature : and their force of reasoning, and their impressiveness of eloquence, are nobly represented by the distinguished name of Richard Baxter.

11. Among the prose works of Milton, some belong to the theological and ecclesiastical controversies of the time; others deal with those social and political questions then discussed in many very able writings, of which his may here suffice as examples. He, like several of his remarkable contemporaries, lived into the succeeding generation : and he may be accepted as the last representative of the eloquence of English Prose, in that brilliant stage of its history, which, when looked at from a general point of view, is found to terminate about the date of the Restoration.

It should be observed, indeed, that, in prose not less than in verse, the earliest aspirants of the new school were producing excellent assay-pieces, while the ancient masters worked with undiminished vigour after their accustomed models. The works of the eccentrically eloquent Sir Thomas Browne, who lived, though without writing, for twenty years in the reign of Charles the Second, are exaggerated specimens, both for good and evil, of all the qualities characterizing the style of his predecessors. Cowley the poet, on the contrary, who hardly survived the Protectorate, has given us a few prose writings which, in point of style, stand alone in their age : they have a modern ease, and simplicity, and regularity, which, if we did not know their date, might induce us to think they must have been composed thirty or forty years later. In a word, the anticipation of the future, with which Hooker's style surprised us at the beginning of our period, is paralleled by that which Cowley's exhibits at its close.

At this point, then, ends the first great section in the History of English Eloquence. Hardly taking more than a beginning in the last generation of Elizabeth's reign, it stretches forward till a little past the middle of the seventeenth century. In regard to the contents of the books in which the most remarkable prose compositions of our language are thus embodied, we shall learn something immediately. In the meantime, we may enable ourselves to understand the Character of the Style which prevails among their writers, by studying an analytic description of it, given by one of our highest critical authorities.

“ To this period belong most of those whom we commonly reckon our Old English Writers ; men often of such sterling worth for their sense, that we might read them with little regard to their language ; yet, in some instances at least, possessing much that

demands praise in this respect. They are generally nervous and effective, copious to redundancy in their command of words, apt to employ what seemed to them ornament with much imagination rather than judicious taste, yet seldom degenerating into commonplace and indefinite phraseology. They have, however, many defects. Some of them, especially the most learned, are full of pedantry, and deform their pages by an excessive and preposterous mixture of Latinisms unknown before: at other times we are disgusted by colloquial and even vulgar idioms or proverbs: nor is it uncommon to find these opposite blemishes, not only in the same author, but in the same passages. Their periods, except in a very few, are ill constructed and tediously prolonged: their ears, again with some exceptions, seem to have been insensible to the beauty of rhythmical prose: grace is commonly wanting: and their notion of the artifices of style, when they thought at all about them, was not congenial to our language. This may be accepted as a general description of the English writers under James and Charles: some of the most famous may, in a certain degree, be deemed to modify the censure."\*

\* Hallam: Introduction to the Literature of Europe in the Fifteenth, Sixteenth, and Seventeenth Centuries.

## CHAPTER IV.

THE AGE OF SPENSER, SHAKSPEARE, BACON, AND MILTON.

A. D. 1558—A. D. 1660.

### SECTION SECOND : THE SCHOLASTIC AND ECCLESIASTICAL LITERATURE.

ERUDITION, CLASSICAL AND ECCLESIASTICAL. 1. General State of Ecclesiastical Learning—Eminent Names—Raynolds—Andrewes—Usher—Classical Studies—Camden and Selden—Latin Prose and Verse.—TRANSLATIONS OF THE HOLY BIBLE. 2. The Geneva Bible—Whittingham—The Bishops' Bible—Parker.—3. King James's Bible—Its History—The Translators—Its Universal Reception.—ORIGINAL THEOLOGICAL WRITINGS. 4. The Elizabethan Period—Hooker's Ecclesiastical Polity—Reign of James—Sermons of Bishop Andrewes—Sermons of Donne.—5. Reign of Charles—Hall and Taylor compared.—6. Bishop Hall—His Sermons—His other Works.—7. Jeremy Taylor—His Treatises—His Sermons—Character of his Eloquence.—8. The Commonwealth and Protectorate—Controversial Writings—The Puritans—Richard Baxter—His Life and Works.

### ERUDITION, CLASSICAL AND ECCLESIASTICAL.

1. THE Prose Literature of the illustrious period with which we are busied, is equally vast in amount and various in range. Our ambition must limit itself to the acquiring of a little knowledge, in regard to a few of the most distinguished names, and a very few of the most valuable or characteristic sorts of writing.

The successive changes having already been traced hastily in the order of time, our task will now be easiest if the phenomena are regarded according to their kinds. Théology and its contributory sciences will first present themselves : philosophy will be followed by history ; and, afterwards, from a varied and interesting mass of miscellaneous compositions, there may be selected and arranged the most remarkable specimens.

The study of the Oriental Languages, and other pursuits bearing

immediately on Theology, flourished largely throughout our period, or, at any rate, from the middle of Elizabeth's time. Several of those churchmen whose English writings will soon call for notice, were honourable examples of the high professional knowledge possessed by their order. Hooker, however, is said to have been the first divine of the Reformed Church who was both remarkably learned and remarkably eloquent. The credit of having been the most erudite among the theologians of the great queen's reign, is assigned to Thomas Raynolds, whose opinions tended to puritanism, and whose works are very little known. The path of learning in which he and other ecclesiastics were most highly distinguished, was that which has been called Patristic Theology, that is, the study of the early Fathers of the Christian Church. The reputation which Raynolds had enjoyed in this field, devolved, in the time of James, on Bishop Andrewes, whose celebrity as an orator will present him again to our view. He may here be described as having been one of the best and wisest of those who held the ecclesiastical views, developed afterwards so uncompromisingly by Archbishop Laud: indeed, if not the founder of this High Church party, he is said to have been certainly the earliest of its literary advocates. In the next reign, the Low Church party, and the Irish nation, possessed the man most famous of all for Patristic learning; one indeed who, while his knowledge extended widely beyond the studies of his profession, has been declared to have been in these the most profound scholar whom the Protestant Church of our country has ever produced. This learned man was Archbishop Usher, who was at the same time one of the most pious and devoted of ministers.

While Theological erudition prospered thus signally, the study of the Pure Classics was by no means prosecuted with so much success. It could not boast of any very celebrated name, either in the more exact school which had formerly prevailed, or in that historical method of philology which was followed so actively on the continent throughout the first half of the seventeenth century. When it is said that the times of James and Charles were learned, what is meant is this; that the literary men were deeply read in classical books, but not that they were deeply versed in classical philology. Greek, likewise, was not so well known as Latin. Probably the most correct and profound of our scholars were such laymen as Camden and Selden: and they, as it has already been remarked, were far from bounding their studies by the limits of the ancient world. Among those men whose pursuits were chiefly classical, Gataker was eminently distinguished. The name of the



industrious Farnaby will sometimes come in the way of the Latin reader : and Sir Henry Saville, eminent for his own learning, was still more so for the munificence with which he aided the studies of others.

Many of the philosophical and polemical writings of the times were couched in Latin : so likewise were some of its histories. In the last stage of the period, poetry was composed elegantly in that tongue by May and Cowley, and still more finely by Milton.

#### THE TRANSLATIONS OF THE HOLY BIBLE.

2. Oriental learning and Classical, a love of goodness, and a zeal for national enlightenment, co-operated in producing the most valuable of those efforts which present themselves in the field of Theology. We have to mark a second series of Translations of the Holy Scriptures : and, to reach its beginnings, we look back, for the last time, to the middle of the sixteenth century.

The first of the three versions whose appearance is now to be recorded, came from the same little knot of exiles, English and Scottish, who had sought refuge in Geneva, and had there already published a revised edition of the New Testament. Their entire Translation of the Bible was printed at the cost of the congregation, one of the most active of whose members was the father of the founder of the Bodleian Library at Oxford. Being completed soon after the accession of Elizabeth, it was published in 1560 : it was accompanied by a dedication to her, and a prefatory epistle "To our beloved in the Lord, the brethren of England, Scotland, and Ireland." Coverdale, John Knox, and several others, have been said to have had some share in the work ; but three only can positively be named, all of whom were afterwards ministers in the Church of England. Whittingham, Calvin's brother-in-law, who had edited the New Testament, was for nearly twenty years Dean of Durham, though troubled by his metropolitan for his Genevese tendencies ; Gilby died at a good old age as Rector of Ashby-de-la-Zouch ; and Sampson, refusing a bishopric, became successively Dean of Christ Church, and a Prebendary of Saint Paul's, losing the first office by being a non-conformist in the matter of costume. The Geneva Bible became, and long continued to be, the favourite version among the English Puritans and Scottish Presbyterians.

It was not, indeed, adopted by the Church of England. But Cranmer's version, which had been restored to public use, was admittedly open to improvements ; and measures were quickly taken for the purpose. The chief promoter of the good work was Matthew

b. 1504. } Parker, Archbishop of Canterbury, one of the most eminent  
 d. 1575. } among the fathers of the English Church. He had the honour,  
 in early life, of declining to become a professor in Oxford, under the  
 patronage of Wolsey; and, attaching himself to the Protestant  
 party, and losing valuable preferments on the accession of Queen  
 Mary, he improved his knowledge still further in his enforced  
 leisure, and was held to be, both in theology and history, one of  
 the best informed men of his day. Now placed at the head of the  
 church, he conducted its organization with great ability and skill,  
 though not always to the satisfaction of those among the clergy  
 who had inclinations towards Puritanism.

It seems to be generally allowed, that his great undertaking, of  
 revising the version of the Scriptures, was executed by men fur-  
 nished with ampler resources of learning, theological, classical, and  
 oriental, than any that had yet been applied in England to the  
 sacred task. His version, which was published in 1568, is usually  
 called the Bishops' Bible, a majority of the fifteen translators having  
 been selected from the bench. Those of them whose names are  
 most widely known were probably the following: Grindal, Parker's  
 energetic successor in the Primacy; Bentham, who was esteemed  
 as a commentator; the despotic and learned Sandys; and Cox, the  
 venerable bishop of Ely, who had been the tutor of Edward the  
 Sixth.

Thenceforth, till our last step, the two new versions were, with  
 hardly any exception, the only ones that issued from the press.  
 We are told that, in the course of Elizabeth's reign, there appeared  
 eighty-five editions of the English Bible, and forty-five of the New  
 Testament; sixty of the former being impressions of the Geneva  
 version.

It is right also to note, in passing, the dates of the Roman  
 Catholic version, commonly known as the Douay Bible. The New  
 Testament appeared in 1582, and the Old Testament in 1610.

3. Our current translation, as every one knows, belongs to the  
 reign of James. The first movement towards it was made in the cele-  
 brated Conference at Hampton Court, when the learned Raynolds,  
 the leader of the puritanical party, and then president of Corpus  
 Christi College in Oxford, proposed to the king that there should be a  
 new version. In 1604, a royal letter, addressed to the Primate Ban-  
 croft, announced that the sovereign had appointed fifty-four learned  
 men for translating the Bible, and ordered that measures should be  
 taken, by securing the co-operation of eminent Greek and Hebrew  
 scholars, and otherwise, for the commencement and progress of the  
 undertaking. The labours of these persons, however, did not begin

till the spring of 1607; they lasted about three years; and the version which was the fruit of them was published in 1611. Among the other instructions issued to the translators, are articles directing, that the Bishops' Bible "shall be followed, and as little altered as the original will permit;" but that the translations of Tyndale, Matthew, Coverdale, Cranmer, and the Geneva Bible, shall "be used when they agree better with the text than the Bishops' Bible."

Of the forty-seven translators whose names are recorded, there were many in regard to whom enough is known to show, that, in the kinds of knowledge qualifying for such a task, they were among the most learned men in a learned age. Oxford, Cambridge, and Westminster, supplied their most eminent scholars, who were distributed into sections, varying in number from ten to seven; the work being apportioned among these, and provision made for an exchange of corrections among the several companies, and for a final revision by a committee. Perhaps Bishop Andrewes was the most famous man among the translators, Raynolds the most profound theologian, and Sir Henry Saville the most distinguished for classical and general accomplishment. The array of Oriental and Rabbinical erudition seems to have been particularly strong.

The Geneva version still for a time retained its popularity: and a new version was one of the abortive schemes of the Long Parliament. A committee of the Protector's Parliament of 1657 consulted several profound scholars, among whom were the philosophical Cudworth, the celebrated Orientalist Brian Walton, and Edmund Castell, his chief coadjutor in the Polyglott Bible. On the evidence of these competent judges, they reported to the House that, taken as a whole, King James's is "the best of any translation in the world." Its reception may be considered as having thereafter been universal.

It is needless to say how nobly simple are the style and diction of this, the book in which all of us read the Word of Truth. Just as little does any one require to be informed, that it has had a wide influence for good on the character of our language. But it may be well that we call to mind the manner in which it was concocted; and that we remember how, as a necessary consequence of this, its phraseology is considerably more antique than that of the time in which it appeared. It was well for the purity of the English tongue, that the history of the English Bible took the course it did.

#### ORIGINAL THEOLOGICAL WRITINGS.

4. Our brief memoranda of original writings, produced by the Old English Divines, open auspiciously with the venerable name of

b. 1553. } Hooker. His great work, the "Ecclesiastical Polity," is  
 d. 1600. } highly valued as an exposition and defence of those views  
 of the relations between church and state, according to which the  
 Reformed Church of England was organized; but it is also a noble  
 effort of philosophical thinking, which is conducted with especial  
 force and mastery in the ethical disquisitions making up its First  
 Book. In point of eloquence, the work is at this day, perhaps, the  
 very noblest monument which our language possesses: it is certainly  
 unapproached by anything that appeared in the next century.  
 More than Ciceronian in its fulness and dignity of style, it wears,  
 with all its richness, a sober majesty which is equally admirable  
 and rare.\*

\* RICHARD HOOKER.

*From the First Book of the Treatise "Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity;"  
 published in 1594.*

Albeit much of that we are to speak in this present cause may seem to a number perhaps tedious, perhaps obscure, dark, and intricate; (for many talk of the truth, which never sounded the depth from whence it springeth; and therefore, when they are led thereunto, they are soon weary, as men drawn from those beaten paths wherewith they have been inured;) yet this may not so far prevail, as to cut off that which the matter itself requireth, howsoever the nice humour of some be therewith pleased or no. They unto whom we shall seem tedious are in no wise injured by us, because it is in their own hands to spare that labour which they are not willing to endure. And if any complain of obscurity, they must consider, that in these matters it cometh no otherwise to pass, than in sundry the works both of art and also of nature, where that which hath greatest force in the very things we see, is notwithstanding itself oftentimes not seen. The stateliness of houses, the goodliness of trees, when we behold them, delighteth the eye: but that foundation which beareth up the one, that root which ministereth unto the other nourishment and life, is in the bosom of the earth concealed; and if there be at any time occasion to search into it, such labour is then more necessary than pleasant, both to them which undertake it and for the lookers-on. In like manner, the use and benefit of good laws all that live under them may enjoy with delight and comfort; albeit the grounds and first original causes from whence they have sprung be unknown, as to the greatest part of men they are. But when they who withdraw their obedience pretend that the laws which they should obey are corrupt and vitious; for better examination of their quality, it behoveth the very foundation and root, the highest well-spring and fountain of them, to be discovered.

\* \* \* \* \*

Now, if nature should intermit her course, and leave altogether, though it were but for a while, the observation of her own laws; if those principal and mother elements of the world, whereof all things in this lower world are made, should lose the qualities which now they have; if the frame of that heavenly arch erected over our heads should loosen and dissolve itself; if



“ His periods, indeed, are generally much too long and too intricate ; but portions of them are beautifully rhythmical : his language is rich in English idiom without vulgarity, and in words of a Latin source without pedantry. He is perhaps the first in England who adorned his prose with the images of poetry. But this he has done more judiciously, and with greater moderation, than others of great name ; and we must be bigots in Attic severity, before we can object to some of his grand figures of speech.” \*

Of the turn of theological writings in the time of James, an adequate idea might probably be gained from the pulpit-oratory of two of its divines. The first, who has already been named for his eminent learning and his position as an ecclesiastical leader, was the most popular preacher of the day : the other, whom we took as the representative of the poetry of his time, transferred himself in middle age from civil life to the church, and appears to have become particularly acceptable to refined and well instructed hearers.

b. 1565. } The sermons of Bishop Andrewes exemplify, very per-  
d. 1626. } tinently, the chief defects in style that have been attributed to the writers of his period ; while to these they add other faults, incident to the effusions of a mind poor in fancy, coarse in taste, ingeniously rash in catching at trivial analogies, and constantly burying good thoughts under a heap of useless phrases. Yet, though they were corrupt models, and dangerous in proportion to the fame of the author, it is not surprising that they made the extraordinary impression they did. They contain, more than any other works of their kind and time, the unworked materials of oratory ; and of oratory, too, belonging to the most severe and powerful class. There is something Demosthenic in the impatient vehemence, with which the pious bishop showers down his short, clumsy, harsh sentences ; and the likeness becomes still more exact, when we hear him alternating stern and eager questions with sad or indignant answers.

celestial spheres should forget their wonted motions, and by irregular volubility turn themselves any way as it might happen ; if the prince of the lights of heaven, which now as a giant doth run his unwearied course, should, as it were, through a languishing faintness, begin to stand and to rest himself ; if the moon should wander from her beaten way, the times and seasons of the year blend themselves by disordered and confused mixtures, the winds breathe out their last gasp, the clouds yield no rain, the earth be defeated of heavenly influence, the fruits of the earth pine away as children at the withered breasts of their mother no longer able to yield them relief : what would become of man himself, whom these things now do all serve ? See we not plainly that obedience of creatures unto the law of nature is the stay of the whole world ?

\* Hallam : Introduction to the Literature of Europe.



His Latin quotations, though incessant, are always brief: his field of erudite illustration is prudently confined; and his multiplied divisions and sub-divisions, being quite agreeable to the growing fashion, may have helped to increase the respect of the hearers for the great strength and ingenuity of thought which the preacher so often showed. There is often much aptness in the parallels, which it is his besetting fault to accumulate so thickly, and overdraw so grotesquely; and an overpowering effect must sometimes have been produced by the dexterous boldness with which, anticipating an adverse opinion or feeling, he throws it back in the teeth of those who were likely to entertain it. Thus, in a charity sermon, catching at a phrase of Latimer's, which (it appears) was not yet forgotten, and briefly admitting the justice of the censure which it implied, he suddenly turns away, to work out, in an opposite direction, the very vein of thought which we found in the martyr's Sermon on the Plough.\*

\* BISHOP ANDREWES.

*From the Sermon (1 Tim. vi. 17, 18, 19,) preached at Saint Mary's Hospital.*

Well then! if to "do good" be a part of the charge, what is it to do good? It is a positive thing (good); not a privative, to do no harm. Yet, as the world goeth now, we are fain so to commend men: "He is an honest man: he doth no hurt:" of which praise any wicked man, that keeps himself to himself, may be partaker. But it is to do some good thing:—What good thing? I will not answer as in the schools: I fear I should not be understood. I will go grossly to work.

This know, that God hath not given sight to the eye to enjoy, but to lighten the members; nor wisdom to the honourable man, but for us men of simple shallow forecast; nor learning to the divine, but for the ignorant; so neither riches to the wealthy, but for those that want relief. Think you Timothy hath his *depositum*, and we ours, and you have none? It is sure you have. We ours, in inward graces and treasures of knowledge; you yours, in outward blessings and treasures of wealth. But both are *deposita*; and we both are feoffees of trust.

I see there is a strange hatred, and a bitter gainsaying, everywhere stirred up against unpreaching prelates (as you term them) and pastors that feed themselves only: and they are well worthy. If I might see the same hatred begun among yourselves, I would think it sincere. But that I cannot see. For that which a slothful divine is in things spiritual, that is a rich man for himself and nobody else in things carnal: and they are not pointed at. But sure you have your harvest, as well as we ours; and that a great harvest. Lift up your eyes and see the streets round about you; the harvest is verily great, and the labourers few. Let us pray (both) that the Lord would thrust out labourers into both these harvests: that, the treasures of knowledge being opened, they may have the bread of eternal life; and, the treasures of well-doing being opened, they may have the bread of this life: and so they may want neither.

*b.* 1573. }  
*d.* 1631. }

Donne's Sermons are of a very different cast. They are immeasurably superior in every point bearing on style; and, if the taste of the writer cannot be called pure, it errs, as in his poetry, by being fantastic, not by being coarse. The poet's fancy sometimes prompts images, and figures of speech, that are full of a serious and thoughtful beauty; and the language, while it flows on with a sustained though not very musical fulness, reaches, in some passages, though not so often as might have been expected, a fine felicity of phrase, not unlike that which adorns so many of his verses. But, when regarded as oral addresses, these interesting compositions are not only not comparable to those of Andrewes, but much below many others of the time. Their tone is essentially meditative, not oratorical. The structure of the style, and the turn of the thoughts, are alike appropriate to the writer in the closet, not to the speaker in the church. While, also, the reflections are sometimes profound, and very often striking, many of them are as subtle and far-fetched as those which deform his lyrical pieces. Many of his most dazzling illustrations are made plausible only by feats of rhetorical sleight-of-hand: the likeness between the objects vanishes, the moment we translate the thoughts into plain terms. In one place he remarks, that east and west are opposites in a flat map, but are made to unite by rolling the map on a globe; and he detects, in this, a parallel to the application of religion to a dejected conscience, which causes tranquillity to take the place of trouble. He produces a very impressive effect, by odd means, in treating the text, "Who hath believed our report?" He declines at first to say where the words are to be found; he dwells on the frequency with which the sacred writers repeat truths that are momentous; and then, announcing that the complaint of the text is made three times in scripture, he uses the fact as a proof of the prevalence of unbelief in all ages. The discourses of Donne derive a touching interest from the course of his history. They are memorials of those twenty years of devotion and charity, of religious study and action, which, when youth had been wasted in the search for worldly fame, and when manhood had been left solitary, closed the life of a man eminent both for genius and for learning.

5. The theological literature of the reign of Charles, is represented in its most brilliant light by two of his celebrated prelates. Joseph Hall and Jeremy Taylor are the most eloquent of all our Old English Divines; and their works were, in themselves, enough to make an epoch in the religious literature of the nation. It may reasonably be questioned, however, whether the younger of the two does not receive more than justice, in the comparisons usually drawn between them.

Alike eminent for Christian piety and conscientious zeal, alike warmed by feelings of deep devotion, they yet exhibit mental characteristics distinguishing them as clearly, as did those differences in opinion and inclination, which exposed the former to the imputation of puritanism, and intrenched the latter impregnably in his reverence for ecclesiastical antiquity and ritual pomp. Much inferior to Taylor in wealth of imagination, Hall stands immeasurably higher in strength of reasoning. Both abound in originality of thought: but the one is clear, systematic, and often profound, in tracing out the relations of the ideas that have suggested themselves to him; the other is hardly ever methodical or exact, is often inconsistent, and still oftener confused. Taylor has no command over his fancy: it continually hurries him away from his path, wafting him so far that we, who are irresistibly carried along with him, lose ourselves in the attempt to find our way back. Hall, on the contrary, hardly ever loses sight of the road for a moment: the finest images which he conjures up (and many of them are wonderfully fine) never displace in his mind the great truths, for the sake of which they are admitted. He is remarkable, also, for the practical plainness and directness of the appeals he makes; nor is he less so for the shrewdness of observation with which he enforces them. Beginning his literary career as a writer of poetical satires, he never forgot the habit of looking around him, on the scenes of life, as well as those of inanimate nature. Hall is as pedantic as Taylor, but not in the same way. His Latin quotation, or his old story, is usually allowed to work its effect without much pains on his part: it is while he develops the course of his own reflections, that he imagines and presents his illustrative sketches of scenery or society. Taylor, while he hardly ever, in his oratorical works at least, stoops to describe familiar life, seems always to have his imagination most actively kindled, not when he is prosecuting his own track of thought, but when a first hint has been given by a book studied, or by a striking event recollected and repeated to us. In the conception and representation of emotion, both of these eloquent men are very powerful. But Taylor's moods of passion bear him onward through long and equably sustained flights: Hall's depth of feeling, often more intense than that of the other, comes in quick bursts, which speedily die away into argument and reflection, or are interrupted and chilled by thoughts suggesting quaint antithetic comparisons. In this last point, not improbably, lies the reason why the former was so much more effective in public oratory than the latter.

b. 1574. } 6. Among those works of Hall's which are not contro-  
d. 1656. } versial, the best known, as well as the largest, is his series

of "Contemplations" on historical passages of the Bible. These are equally admirable for their soundness of judgment, their correctness of commentary, and the devoutness which continually pervades their temper. Perhaps the cast of his genius is better shown in some of his other efforts.

His Pulpit-Discourses cannot be said to equal Taylor's; yet some of them, such as the "Passion Sermon," are nobly and even ornately eloquent. If his erudition is obtruded frequently, it is seldom paraded at great length; and he works up, with great force, some illustrations which remind us that his generation had not long emerged from the middle ages. Citing Bromyard as his authority, he tells his hearers an improved version of the story of the golden apple, which we met with in the *Gesta*. Again, desiring to exemplify the spiritual warfare of Saint Paul, he describes, from an historian of the Norman Time, the ceremonies which attended the consecration of Hereward the Saxon to the dignity of knighthood. Frank allusions to social habits and contemporary occurrences are as common in his sermons as in his other compositions; nor do we escape without two or three puns. The prevalent tone is serious, heartfelt, and anxiously earnest; and there are many outbreaks of vehement emotion. In one majestic passage, of a discourse denouncing the cruelties of war, he describes the Queen and people of England kneeling in prayer, while the colossal fleet of Spain floated towards the shore like a moving wood: in another place he contrasts, with remarkable picturesqueness of portraiture, the prevalent worldliness of the time with the Christian's mortification of body and spirit: and a discourse on the transformation and renewing of the mind is embellished with a profusion of analogies and instances, resembling not remotely the favourite strain of Taylor.

But Hall's strength is put forth most successfully in some writings akin to the "Contemplations;" and these are so few, so small in bulk, and so little marked by the oddities of the age, that every reader may become acquainted with this great man, more easily and pleasantly than with any of his contemporaries. His "Characters of Virtues and Vices," though they were among the earliest models of a kind of sketches, which became very fashionable, might safely be overlooked; unless we wished to see the author freely indulging his inclination to epigrammatic contrasts. He will be studied, with greatest advantage, in two collections, containing detached fragments of reflection: the "Occasional Meditations;" and the "Three Centuries of Meditations and Vows." The latter series is the more various of the two, both in tone and in form. Brief apophthegms, and acute hints on life and manners, alternate with



prolonged trains of contemplation, breaking out incessantly into fervent prayer. The pieces of the other series are particularly rich in beautiful description. They set down thoughts prompted by ordinary objects and occurrences, of town and country, of life and death, of man and nature; the redbreast at the window, the weedy field of corn, the starry heavens, the rising in the morning and the lying down at night, a lovely landscape of hill and vale, a spring bubbling up in the wild forest, a negro and an idiot seen in the street, the red-cross chalked on a door during the plague, the passing-bell proclaiming the departure of a soul, the ruins of an ancient abbey, and a heap of stones which might have covered the grave of the first martyr. In all the meditations, of both groups, the evidence of great literary power is quite unequivocal. When the witty and accomplished Sir Henry Wotton gave to his friend Bishop Hall the name of "The English Seneca," he compared our Christian philosopher with a man to whom, in every respect, he was immeasurably superior.\*

\* BISHOP HALL.

I. *From the "Meditations and Vows, Divine and Moral."*

\*                      \*                      \*                      \*                      \*

I never loved those salamanders, that are never well but when they are in the fire of contention. I will rather suffer a thousand wrongs, than offer one: I will suffer an hundred, rather than return one: I will suffer many, ere I will complain of one and endeavour to right it by contending. I have ever found, that to strive with my superior, is furious; with my equal, doubtful; with my inferior, sordid and base; with any, full of unquietness.

\*                      \*                      \*                      \*                      \*

The world is a stage: every man is an actor, and plays his part, here, either in a comedy or tragedy. The good man is a comedian, which, however he begins, ends merrily: but the wicked man acts a tragedy, and therefore ever ends in horror. Thou seest a wicked man vaunt himself on this stage: stay till the last act, and look to his end, (as David did,) and see whether that be peace. Thou wouldst make strange tragedies, if thou wouldst have but one act. The best wicked man cannot be so envied in his first shows, as he is pitiable in his conclusion.

\*                      \*                      \*                      \*                      \*

As Love keeps the whole law, so Love only is the breaker of it; being the ground, as of all obedience, so of all sin. For, whereas sin hath been commonly accounted to have two roots, Love and Fear; it is plain that Fear hath his original from Love: for no man fears to lose aught but what he loves. Here is sin and righteousness brought both into a short sum, depending both upon one poor affection: it shall be my only care, therefore, to bestow my love well, both for object and measure. All that is good I may love, but in several degrees; what is simply good, absolutely; what is good by circumstance, only with limitation. There be these three things that I may love without exception; God, my neighbour, my soul; yet so as



b. 1613. } 7. Jeremy Taylor's controversial tracts, and his essays  
d. 1667. } in dogmatic theology, lie, like similar writings of Hall,  
beyond our sphere. But two which fall within this description  
require a passing notice. In his "Liberty of Propheying," Taylor

each have their due place : my body, goods, fame, et cetera, as servants to  
the former. All other things I will either not care for, or hate.

\* \* \* \* \*

The estate of heavenly and earthly things is plainly represented to us by  
the two lights of heaven, which are appointed to rule the night and the day.  
Earthly things are rightly resembled by the Moon, which, being nearest to  
the region of mortality, is ever in changes, and never looks upon us twice  
with the same face ; and, when it is at the full, is blemished with some dark  
blots, not capable of any illumination. Heavenly things are figured by the  
Sun, whose great and glorious light is both natural to itself and ever con-  
stant. That other fickle and dim star is fit enough for the night of misery,  
wherein we live here below. And this firm and beautiful light is but good  
enough for that day of glory, which the saints live in.

\* \* \* \* \*

## II. *From the "Occasional Meditations."*

### *Upon the Sight of a Great Library.*

What a world of wit is here packed up together ! I know not whether  
this sight doth more dismay or comfort me. It dismays me to think, that  
here is so much that I cannot know : it comforts me to think, that this  
variety yields so good helps to know what I should. There is no truer  
word than that of Solomon : "There is no end of making many books."  
This sight verifies it : there is no end : indeed it were pity there should.  
God hath given to man a busy soul, the agitation whereof cannot but,  
through time and experience, work out many hidden truths : to suppress these  
would be no other than injurious to mankind, whose minds, like unto so  
many candles, should be kindled by each other. The thoughts of our  
deliberation are most accurate : these we vent into our papers.

What an happiness is it, that, without all offence of necromancy, I may here  
call up any of the ancient worthies of learning, whether human or divine,  
and confer with them of all my doubts ! That I can at pleasure summon  
whole synods of reverend fathers and acute doctors from all the coasts of the  
earth, to give their well studied judgments in all points of question which I  
propose ! Neither can I cast my eye casually upon any of these silent mas-  
ters, but I must learn somewhat. It is a wantonness to complain of choice.  
No law binds us to read all : but the more we can take in and digest, the  
better-liking must the mind needs be.

Blessed be God, that hath set up so many clear lamps in his Church !  
Now none but the wilfully blind can plead darkness. And blessed be the  
memory of those his faithful servants, that have left their blood, their  
spirits, their lives, in these precious papers ; and have willingly wasted  
themselves into these during monuments, to give light unto others !

### *Upon Hearing of Music by Night.*

How sweetly doth this music sound in this dead season ! In the daytime  
it would not, it could not, so much affect the ear. All harmonious sounds

was the first to enter a direct protest in behalf of tolerance in religion; a principle which, however familiar now, was not so before the Civil War. His "Ductor Dubitantium" is a treatise on Casuistry, a guide for clerical dealing with cases of conscience: and the attempt to revive systematic rules of the sort was a characteristic instance of the writer's constant hankering after antique opinions and usages. Among his practical works, the most popular are his "Holy Living" and "Holy Dying;" but, fine as are these, and his "Life of Christ," he is still more at home in his devotional treatises, such as the "Golden Grove."

Although these, again, abound with his deep fervour of sentiment, their form gives little scope for his great variety of literary accomplishment. It is his Sermons that have gained for him the fame he commonly enjoys, as the most eloquent of our Old Divines. Taken all in all, they perhaps evince such a combination of powers, as has not appeared in any other pulpit-orations. They have been described admirably by one of our best critics; to whose estimate of them this only should be premised. The faults of the great preacher are mainly attributable to two causes: to his abstracted and imaginative turn of mind, which makes him too often forget his audience in the delighted eagerness with which he contemplates his own thoughts; and to the pedantic and uncritical tastes of his age, which are the root of almost all his other defects.\*

are advanced by a silent darkness. Thus it is with the glad tidings of salvation: the Gospel never sounds so sweet, as in the night of persecution or of our own private affliction. It is ever the same: the difference is in our disposition to receive it. Oh God, whose praise it is to give songs in the night, make my prosperity conscionable and my crosses cheerful!

\* JEREMY TAYLOR.

*From the Sermon on the Day of Judgment.*

When the first day of judgment happened, that (I mean) of the universal deluge of waters on the old world, the calamity swelled like the flood; and every man saw his friend perish, and the neighbours of his dwelling, and the relatives of his house, and the sharers of his joys, and yesterday's bride, and the new born heir, the priest of the family, and the honour of the kindred; all dying or dead, drenched in water and the Divine vengeance: and then they had no place to flee unto; no man cared for their souls: they had none to go unto for counsel, no sanctuary high enough to keep them from the vengeance that rained down from heaven. And so it shall be at the Day of Judgment, when that world and this, and all that shall be born hereafter, shall pass through the same Red Sea, and be all baptized with the same fire, and be involved in the same cloud, in which shall be thunderings and terrors infinite. Every man's fear shall be increased by his neighbour's shrieks: and the amazement that all the world shall be in shall unite as the sparks of a

“An imagination essentially poetical, and sparing none of the decorations which, by critical rules, are deemed almost peculiar to verse ; a warm tone of piety, sweetness, and charity ; an accumulation of circumstantial accessories whenever he reasons, or persuades, or describes ; an erudition pouring itself forth in quotation, till his sermons become in some places almost a garland of flowers from all other writers, and especially from those of classical antiquity, never before so redundantly scattered from the pulpit, distinguish Taylor from his contemporaries by their degree, as they do from most of his successors by their kind. His sermons on the Marriage Ring, on the House of Feasting, on the Apples of Sodom, may be named without disparagement to others, which perhaps ought to stand in equal place. But they are not without considerable faults, some of which have just been hinted. The eloquence of Taylor is great ; but it is not eloquence of the highest class : it is far too Asiatic, too

raging furnace into a globe of fire, and roll on its own principle, and increase by direct appearances and intolerable reflections. He that stands in a churchyard in the time of a great plague, and hears the passing-bell perpetually telling the sad stories of death, and sees crowds of infected bodies pressing to their graves, and others sick and tremulous, and death dressed up in all the images of sorrow round about him, is not supported in his spirit by the variety of his sorrow. And at Doomsday, when the terrors are universal, besides that it is itself so much greater, because it can affright the whole world, it is also made greater by communication and a sorrowful influence ; grief being then strongly infectious, when there is no variety of state, but an entire kingdom of fear : and amazement is the king of all our passions, and all the world its subjects : and that shriek must needs be terrible, when millions of men and women at the same instant shall fearfully cry out, and the noise shall mingle with the trumpet of the archangel, with the thunders of the dying and groaning heavens, and the crack of the dissolving world, when the whole fabric of nature shall shake into dissolution and eternal ashes.

But this general consideration may be heightened with four or five circumstances.

First, consider what an infinite multitude of angels, and men, and women, shall then appear. It is a huge assembly, when the men of one kingdom, the men of one age in a single province, are gathered together into heaps and confusion of disorder : but then, all kingdoms of all ages, all the armies that ever mustered, all the world that Augustus Cæsar taxed, all those hundreds of millions that were slain in all the Roman wars, from Numa's time till Italy was broken into principalities and small exarchates ; all these, and all that can come into numbers, and that did descend from the loins of Adam, shall at once be represented : to which account if we add the armies of heaven, the nine orders of blessed spirits, and the infinite numbers in every order, we may suppose the numbers fit to express the majesty of that God, and the terror of that Judge, who is the Lord and Father of all that unimaginable multitude. *Erit terror ingens tot simul tantorumque populorum.*

much in the style of Chrysostom and other declaimers of the fourth century, by the study of whom he had probably vitiated his taste. His learning is ill-placed, and his arguments often as much so; not to mention that he has the common defect of alleging nugatory proofs. His vehemence loses its effect by the circuitry of his pleonastic language: his sentences are of endless length, and hence not only altogether unmusical, but not always reducible to grammar. But he is still the greatest ornament of the English pulpit up to the middle of the seventeenth century; and we have no reason to believe, or rather much reason to disbelieve, that he had any competitor in other languages." \*

8. Many distinguished theologians, whose writings were entirely controversial, or not eminent as literary compositions, must be allowed to pass unnoticed. But we are not deviating from the order of time, in here naming two learned controversialists whose fame has survived their own age. The one, commonly known as "the ever-memorable John Hales of Eton," busied himself chiefly in attacking the ecclesiastical system, of which Andrewes had been the most skilful defender, and Laud the most active promoter. The other, William Chillingworth, has been declared by Locke and Reid to have been one of the best of all reasoners. The work which preserves his memory, "The Religion of Protestants a Safe Way to Salvation," is directed against Romanism, especially impugning the authority of tradition and maintaining the sufficiency of Scripture.

These names introduce us to the theological writings of the Commonwealth and Protectorate, which, however, do by no means possess a literary importance comparable with that of the preceding times. The Puritan divines, with few exceptions, found occupation more than enough, in the share they now took in public affairs, and in the contests which sprang out of their own diversities of opinion. Some of the ablest among them wrote no works that possess general interest: some, like Calamy, the leader, for a time at least, of the Presbyterians, hardly wrote any thing at all. Others, likewise, whose time of action came chiefly after the Restoration, will then present themselves under another name.

But to the age of our illustrious ancients belonged distinctively, in spirit as well as in manner, in thought as well as in style, the celebrated man who, Hall and Taylor and other churchmen having in the meantime been put to silence, was beyond all doubt the intellectual chief of the theologians belonging to the close of our great period.

\* Hallam: Introduction to the Literature of Europe.



b. 1615. } The name of Richard Baxter would claim a place in  
 d. 1691. } the literary history of his time, although the topics on which his great talents were employed had been the most trifling of all, instead of being, as they were, the most momentous. Filling many volumes, written with ceaseless haste, produced in continual pain of body and not infrequent persecution and trouble, expressed with the clumsiness of a writer who understood little about laws of style and cared still less, and flowing from a mind whose knowledge was very various but nowhere very exact, they are the monuments of an indomitable energy of purpose that has never been surpassed: and not less extraordinary are they in the combination of faculties and capacities which they evince, powers indeed so diverse, and used with so unsparing a readiness, that the work is often all the worse in general effect for the very fulness of the intellect by which it was dictated. If Andrewes, with modern discipline, would probably have been one of the greatest of English orators, Baxter might certainly, had he so willed it, have bequeathed to us either consummate masterpieces of impressive eloquence, or records of philosophic thought unsurpassed in analytic subtlety. But the pastor of Kidderminster lived, not for worldly fame or the pleasure of intellectual exertion, but for the teaching of what he held to be truth, and for the service of the Maker in whose presence he every hour expected to stand. His thoughts were hurried forward, too quickly for clear exposition, by the eager impetuosity of his temperament: and they were confined, by his overwhelming sense of religious responsibility, to a track which admitted too few accessory and illustrative ideas. All his writings, as he himself has told us, were set down with the haste of a man who, remembering that he laboured under mortal disease, never counted on finishing the page he had begun.

When regarded merely in a literary view, his works are surprising fruits of circumstances so unfavourable. But they have in themselves very great value, both for their originality and acuteness of thought, and for their vigorous and passionate though very unpolished eloquence. Nor can any thing be finer than the tone of piety which sheds its halo over them, or the courageous integrity with which the writer now probes every alleged truth to its roots, and now turns back to acknowledge and retrieve his own errors.

His vast mass of polemical tracts, and the few treatises in which, as in his Latin "Method of Theology" and his English "Catholic Theology," he expounds systematically his peculiar views of Christian doctrine, are declared, by those who have studied them, to give



decisive evidence of his intellectual power. Perhaps the most interesting of all his writings is the posthumous memoir of "Memorable Passages of his Life and Times." It is especially admirable as a narrative of the progress and changes of religious opinion and sentiment, in a mind robust both in intellect and in passion. His Sermons, always irregular in style and often positively vulgar, abound in passages of great oratorical strength: in truth, it is one of the most remarkable points about this remarkable man, that, in starting so many original thoughts, and in tracing out their consequences with such fulness of inference and such refinement of analysis, he should yet have been able to rivet the attention and arouse the feelings of a congregation as we know him to have done. But, when we read his pulpit-orations, we cannot be surprised by the great effect they produced.

No religious books better deserve their popularity than some of his Practical Treatises, especially those that are best known, "The Saints' Everlasting Rest" and "The Call to the Unconverted." They exhibit the essence, both of his eloquence and of his thinking, as clearly as the Sermons; and in point of language they are much better. But they must not be judged from modern abridgments, the very best of which are to them what the skeleton is to the statue. None of our old divines will bear being abridged: and the plan of Baxter's works, embracing a multiplicity of particulars, each of which is essential to the symmetry of the whole, is such as to make them less susceptible of the process than most others of their class.

RICHARD BAXTER.

*From "The Saints' Everlasting Rest," published in 1650.*

Why dost thou look so sadly on those withered limbs, and on that pining body? Do not so far mistake thyself, as to think its joys and thine are all one; or that its prosperity and thine are all one; or that they must needs stand or fall together. When it is rotting and consuming in the grave, then shalt thou be a companion of the perfected spirits of the just; and, when those bones are scattered about the churchyard, then shalt thou be praising God in rest. And, in the meantime, hast not thou food of consolation which the flesh knoweth not of, and a joy which this stranger meddleth not with? And do not think that, when thou art turned out of this body, thou shalt have no habitation. Art thou afraid thou shalt wander destitute of a resting-place? Is it better resting in flesh than in God? \* \* Dost thou think that those souls, which are now with Christ, do so much pity their rotten or dusty corpse, or lament that their ancient habitation is ruined and their once comely bodies turned into earth? Oh, what a thing is strangeness and disacquaintance! It maketh us afraid of our dearest friends, and to draw back from the place of our only happiness. So was it with thee towards thy chiefest friends on earth: while thou wast unacquainted with them, thou didst withdraw

from their society ; but, when thou didst once know them thoroughly, thou wouldst have been loath again to be deprived of their fellowship. And even so, though thy strangeness to God and to another world do make thee loath to leave this flesh ; yet, when thou hast been but one day or hour there, (if we may so speak of that Eternity, where is neither day nor hour,) thou would be full loath to return to this flesh again. Doubtless when God, for the glory of his Son, did send back the soul of Lazarus into its body, He caused it quite to forget the glory which it had enjoyed, and to leave behind it the remembrance of that happiness together with the happiness itself : or else it might have made his life a burden to him, to think of the blessedness that he was fetched from ; and have made him ready to break down the prison-doors of his flesh, that he might return to that happy state again.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE AGE OF SPENSER, SHAKSPEARE, BACON, AND MILTON.

A.D. 1558—A.D. 1660.

#### SECTION THIRD : THE MISCELLANEOUS PROSE LITERATURE.

SEMI-THEOLOGICAL WRITERS. 1. Fuller's Works—Cudworth—Henry More.  
—PHILOSOPHICAL WRITERS. 2. Lord Bacon—The Design of his Philosophy—His Two Problems—His Chief Works.—3. Hobbes—His Political and Social Theories—His Ethics—His Psychology—His Style.—HISTORICAL WRITERS. 4. Social and Political Theories—Antiquaries—Historians—Raleigh—Milton's History of England—His Historical and Polemical Tracts—His Style.—MISCELLANEOUS WRITERS. 5. Writers of Voyages and Travels—Literary Critics—Sir Philip Sidney's Defence of Poesy—Romances and Novels—Sidney's Arcadia—Short Novels—Greene—Lyly—Pamphlets—Controversy on the Stage—Martin Mar-Prelate—Smectymnuus.—6. Essays describing Characters—Didactic Essays—Bacon's Essays—Selden—Burton—Sir Thomas Browne—Cowley's Essays.

#### SEMI-THEOLOGICAL WRITERS.

1. IN passing from theology to other quarters, we may allow ourselves to be introduced by one of the most eloquent preachers of Charles's time, a man who was accustomed to have two audiences, the one seated in the church, the other listening eagerly through the open windows.

b. 1608. } Thomas Fuller is most widely known through his "Wor-  
d. 1661. } thies of England." But he was a voluminous and various author, both of ecclesiastical and other works. He is the very strangest writer in our language. Perhaps no man ever excelled him in fulness and readiness of wit: certainly no man ever printed so many of his own jests. His joyousness overflows without ceasing, pouring forth good-natured sarcasms, humorous allusions, and facetious stories, and punning and ringing changes on words with inexhaustible oddity of invention. His eccentricity found its way to his title-pages: "Good Thoughts in Bad Times," at an early stage of the war, were followed by "Good Thoughts in Worse Times:" and this series closed, at the Restoration, with "Mixed Contemplations in Better Times." If this were all, Fuller might

be worthless. But the light-hearted jester was one of the most industrious of inquirers: we owe to him an immense number of curious facts, collected from recondite books, from an extensive correspondence kept up on purpose, and from researches which went on most actively of all while he wandered about as a chaplain in the royal army. In his "Worthies," the only book of his that is now valuable as an authority, he is hardly anything else than a lively and observant gossip. But elsewhere he is more ambitious. Though he has little vigour of reasoning, and no wide command of principles, his teeming fancy presents every object in some new light; oftenest evolving ludicrous images, but often also guided by serious emotion. His "Church-History of Britain," his "History of the Holy War," (that is the Crusades,) and his "Pisgah-View of Palestine," have no claim to be called great historical compositions; but they are inimitable collections of spiritedly told stories: and in the portraits of character, the short biographies, and the pithy maxims, which make up his "Holy State" and "Profane State," he is, more than anywhere, shrewd, amusing, instructive, and often eloquent. His style is commendable, if compared with that which was common in his time: his goodness and piety were real, in spite of his ungovernable levity: he was a kindly man, a peacemaker in the midst of strife: and his exuberant wit never struck harshly a personal enemy or an adverse sect.\*

\* THOMAS FULLER.

*From "The Holy State:" published in 1648.*

I. The true Church Antiquary is a traveller into former times, whence he hath learned their language and fashions. 1. He baits at middle Antiquity, but lodges not till he comes at that which is ancient indeed. 2. He desires to imitate the ancient Fathers, as well in their piety as in their postures; not only conforming his hands and knees, but chiefly his heart, to their pattern. Oh, the holiness of their living and painfulness of their preaching! How full were they of mortified thoughts and heavenly meditations! Let us not make the ceremonial part of their lives only canonical, and the moral part thereof altogether apocrypha; imitating their devotion, not in the fineness of the stuff, but only in the fashion of the making. 3. He carefully marks the declination of the church from the primitive purity; observing how, sometimes, humble Devotion was contented to lie down, whilst proud Superstition got on her back. 4. He doth not so adore the Ancients as to despise the Modern. Grant them but dwarfs: yet stand they on giants' shoulders, and may see the farther. Sure as stout champions of Truth follow in the rear, as ever marched in the front. Besides, as one excellently observes, *Antiquitas seculi juvenus mundi*. These times are the ancient times, when the world is ancient; and not those which we count ancient by a computation backwards from ourselves.

II. In Building we must respect Situation, Contrivance, Receipt, Strength,

Two contemporaries of Fuller, eminent in theology, were still more so in Philosophy. Regarding existence from that lofty and spiritual point of view which had been taken up anciently by Plato, both Ralph Cudworth and Henry More are among the few instances of deviation from the track which English speculation has in modern times chiefly followed, and into which the two most celebrated philosophers of their own day co-operated in leading it. They are alike opposed to the empirical tendencies which lay hidden in the theories of Bacon, and to the sensualistic doctrines that were more directly developed by Hobbes. Cudworth's "True Intellectual System of the Universe," a work which has been very diversely estimated, has for its chief aim the confuting, on *à priori* principles, the system of Atheism: its ethical appendix is directed against the selfish theory of morals. More's works, very fine pieces both of thinking and of eloquence, are still more deficient in clearness than those of his friend: he loses himself in a twofold labyrinth of New-Platonism and Rabbinical learning.

In the generation before the two Oxford friends, we find the meditative sceptic Lord Herbert of Cherbury, whose writings, though unfortunately teaching different lessons from theirs, resemble them in their deviation from the prevalent turn of thinking.

and Beauty. 1. Chiefly choose a good air. For air is a dish one feeds on every minute; and therefore it need be good. Wood and water are two staple commodities where they may be had. The former I confess hath made so much iron, that it must now be bought with the more silver, and grows daily dearer. But 'tis as well pleasant as profitable, to see a house cased with trees, like that of Anchises in Troy. Next a pleasant prospect is to be respected. A medley view (such as of water and land at Greenwich) best entertains the eyes, refreshing the wearied beholder with exchange of objects. Yet I know a more profitable prospect; where the owner can only see his own land round about. 2. A fair entrance with an easy ascent gives a great grace to a building: where the hall is a preferment out of the court, the parlour out of the hall; not as in some old buildings, where the doors are so low pigmies must stoop, and the rooms so high that giants may stand upright. Light, Heaven's eldest daughter, is a principal beauty in a building; yet it shines not alike from all parts of heaven. An east window welcomes the infant beams of the sun before they are of strength to do any harm, and is offensive to none but a sluggard. In a west window, in summer-time towards night, the sun grows low and over-familiar, with more light than delight. \* \* \* 3. As for receipt, a house had better be too little for a day, than too great for a year. And it's easier borrowing of thy neighbour a brace of chambers for a night, than a bag of money for a twelvemonth. 4. As for strength, country-houses must be substantives, able to stand of themselves. 5. Beauty remains behind as the last to be regarded; because houses are made to be lived in, not looked on. \* \* \*



## PHILOSOPHICAL WRITERS.

2. At the extremes of our period we encounter, in the Philosophical field, two of the strongest thinkers that have appeared in Modern Europe. Francis Bacon's smaller writings belong to the last years of the sixteenth century, his great efforts to the reign of James: Thomas Hobbes, beginning to write in the reign of Charles the First, continued to do so for many years after the Restoration.

b. 1561. } Some of Bacon's minor writings will come in our way by  
 d. 1626. } and by, and will exemplify that union of wide reflection with strong imagination, which, while it gave its character to his philosophy, was not less active in its effect on his style. In the meantime, we are concerned with those efforts of his for aiding in the discovery of truth, which have made his name immortal in the records of modern science.

An attempt at exactly expounding the philosophy of Bacon would here be as much out of place, as it would be to aim at accounting for the differences of opinion that have arisen as to the value of his doctrines. But we may prepare ourselves for understanding his position in the history of intellect, if we consider him as having aimed at the solution of two great problems. The answers to these were intended to constitute the "Instauratio Magna," the Great Restoration of Philosophy, that colossal work, towards which the chief writings of the illustrious author were contributions.

The first problem was, an Analytic Classification of all Departments of Human Knowledge; the laying down, as it were, of an intellectual map, in which all arts and sciences should be exhibited in their relation to each other, their boundaries being distinctly marked off, the present state of each being indicated, and hints being given for the correction of errors and the supplying of deficiencies. Imperfect and erroneous as his scheme may be allowed to be, D'Alembert and his French coadjutors, in the middle of last century, were able to do no more than copy and distort it. The accomplishment of the task which Bacon undertook, at a time when materials enough had not been amassed, is now beginning to be acknowledged as one of the weightiest desiderata in philosophy. It has anew been attempted, in its whole compass, by two powerful though irregular thinkers of our century, the one in France, the other in England: and it has been prosecuted very successfully in the physical sciences, especially by Whewell and Ampère.

This part of Bacon's speculations may be studied by the English reader, in his own eloquent exposition of it. It occupies,

chiefly though not wholly, his treatise "On the Advancement of Learning." Desiring, however, to make his opinions accessible to all learned men in Europe, he caused the book, with large additions, to be translated into Latin, under the title "*De Augmentis Scientiarum*."

In the same language only did he teach the other sections of his system. The most important of these he called the "*Novum Organum*," challenging, in the courageous self-confidence of genius, a comparison with the ancient "*Organon*," the logical text-book of Aristotle. In this treatise mainly it is, that he expounds the methods he proposed for solving the second of his problems. This is the portion of his speculations which has been most studied, and which has given rise to the greater part of the controversies in regard to the value of his philosophy. The design on which he worked may easily be understood.

The "*Novum Organum*" is a contribution to Logic, the science which is the theory of the art of Reasoning: it undertakes to supply certain deficiencies, under which the Ancient or Aristotelian Logic admittedly labours. In all sciences, mental as well as physical, the premises on which we found are of such a character, that we are in a greater or less degree liable, in reasoning from them, to infer more than they warrant. The ancient logic is able to show that such inferences are bad, as involving, in one way or another, the logical fallacy of inferring from a part to the whole: but it is powerless when, presenting to it several conclusions, all invalidly inferred, none of them certainly true, but all of them in themselves more or less probable, we ask it to aid us in determining their comparative probability. What Bacon did was this. He endeavoured to purify our reasoning from such premises, by subjecting it to a system of checks and counter-checks, which should have the effect, not indeed of totally expunging the error of the conclusion, but of making it as small as possible, and of reducing it in many cases to an inappreciable minimum. This is, on the one side, the purpose of those laws by which he guards our assumption of premises, as in his famous exposition of the "idols" or prejudices of the human mind: and it is also, on the other side, the use designed to be served by the rules he lays down, for determining the comparative sufficiency of given instances as specimens of the whole class in regard to which we wish to draw inferences from them.

The perfect solution of this ambitious problem is unattainable; but, in every science, progress will be proportional to the extent to which the partial solution is carried. In the physical sciences it may be worked out very far; and, in this wide region of knowledge,

not only were Bacon's principles happily accordant with the turn which philosophy was about to take, but the spirit and the details of his system alike chimed in with the practical and cautious temper of the English nation. It cannot well be doubted, that his writings, though they received in his lifetime the neglect for which he proudly prepared himself, gave a mighty impulse to scientific thinking for at least a century after him. It is perhaps equally certain that, even in the philosophy of corporeal things, discovery has now reached a point, at which Bacon's methods are much less extensively useful; and, in our own country, as well as abroad, some of the most active minds have lately begun to aim at fitting new instruments to the strong and flexible hand of modern science.

3. On philosophy in England, though not in Scotland, the influence of Hobbes has been much greater than that of Bacon. b. 1588.  
d. 1679. } In our own generation his memory has profited, more largely than that of almost any other philosopher, by that prevalent disposition, half-paradoxical, half-generous, which has resuscitated so many defunct celebrities, and given defenders to so many opinions that used to be universally condemned as dangerous or false.

Some of his doctrines, and these making the very key-stone of his system, are not vindicated by any one. When he lays down his political theory of uncontrolled absolutism; and when, with strict consistency, he desires to subject religion and morality themselves to the will of the sovereign: his most zealous admirers content themselves with interpreting him for the better, in a fashion reminding one of that which has been adopted, in a more plausible case, by the excusers of Machiavelli. By the writer himself, all his other speculations seem to have been intended as merely subordinate to the social system which he thus expounded: into his great political treatise, the "*Leviathan*," he incorporated all those minor inquiries, which we may read elsewhere also both in his English and in his Latin works.

His Ethical Theory, which resolves all our impulses regarding right and wrong into Self-love, does, however objectionable in itself, admit of being brought, by convenient accommodations, within no very great distance of the utilitarian theories of morals which have generally been the most popular in England. Unprejudiced readers will be more likely to agree in their estimate of the services he has rendered to other branches of mental philosophy. Always tending, if not more than tending, towards that metaphysical school which derives all human knowledge from without, and which issues in making reason and conscience alike subject to the senses, he is

yet, for those who can use his hints aright, one of the most instructive of teachers in Psychology. What he has written on the Association of Ideas, is among the most valuable contributions that have ever been rendered to this branch of science: nor are there anywhere wanting masterly pieces of analysis. He has also used his skill of reflective dissection, with great effect, in his treatise on Logic. The patient accuracy with which he observed mental phenomena, seldom led astray unless when he was mastered by some favourite and deep-rooted idea, has justly been commended by the celebrated critic whose opinion of his language will immediately be quoted; and who is not indisposed to claim for Hobbes the honour, assigned by Dugald Stewart to Descartes, of having been the father of Experimental Psychology.

In his reasoning, Hobbes is admirably close and consistent. If we grant his premises, it is hardly ever possible to question his conclusions: and it is always easy, if attention be given, to trace every step by which the process of inference is carried on. In style, he has all the excellence which is compatible with a profound sluggishness of imagination, and a total want of emotive power. It has justly been said to be the perfection of mere didactic language. In the history of our literature, too, he deserves commemoration as one of the earliest of those writers who were distinguished, negatively, by the general absence of great faults in style. "Hobbes is perhaps the first of whom we can say that he is a good English writer. For the excellent passages of Hooker, Sidney, Raleigh, Bacon, Taylor, Chillingworth, and others of the Elizabethan or the first Stuart period, are not sufficient to establish their claim; a good writer being one whose composition is nearly uniform, and who never sinks to such inferiority or negligence as we must confess in most of these. Hobbes is clear, precise, spirited, and, above all, free in general from the faults of his predecessors: his language is sensibly less obsolete: he is never vulgar, rarely, if ever, quaint or pedantic."\*

#### HISTORICAL WRITERS.

4. We have dwelt long in the company of our Old Divines, men who not only were the most eloquent prose writers of their time, but influenced their contemporaries more powerfully than any generation has since been influenced by theology, whether from the press

\* Hallam: Literature of Europe.



or from the pulpit. Nor have we been able to part very speedily from those two celebrated philosophers, who, living in a great age, communicated, for good or for evil, a strong impulse to the race that succeeded. Other departments in the Prose Literature of the period, though all were thickly filled, and several of them richly adorned, must be passed over with a haste which it is difficult not to be sorry for.

Speculations on the Theory of Society and Civil Polity were frequent throughout the whole of our period. First may be named the Latin work, or rather works, "On the State," by William Bellenden, a Scotsman, which have been restored to notice in modern times by Parr's famous Whig preface. Ideas on social relations were thrown into the shape of an English romance by Lord Bacon in his "New Atlantis;" and Harrington, in his "Oceana," delineated an aristocratic republic in the same manner. The "Leviathan" of Hobbes may close this series.

In the collection of materials for national history, the period was exceedingly active. Camden and Selden stand at the head of our band of Antiquaries; and along with them may be named Spelman, Cotton, and Speed. Under this head also might be classed Archbishop Usher's valuable contributions to the Ecclesiastical Antiquities and History of the country.

Camden himself was an historian. So were several others whose names we encounter elsewhere: such as Bacon, whose "History of Henry the Seventh" is in no way very remarkable; the poets Daniel and Drummond; and the many-sided Hobbes, who wrote in his old age "Behemoth, or a History of the Civil Wars." Knolles's "Turkish History" has been pronounced, by some of our best critics, to be one of the most animated narratives which the language possesses. A little before its appearance, a "History of the World," from the Creation to the middle of the republican period of Rome, was composed in the Tower of London, by a man lying there under sentence of death. The case is parallel to the production of the great work of Boethius: and the name of the writer is *b. 1552.* } better known in England. He was Sir Walter Raleigh:  
*d. 1618.* } and the work, while it displays so much learning as to have excited a suspicion probably ungrounded, is, in its fine and poetic eloquence, and its solemn thoughtfulness, at once worthy of the chivalrous author and touchingly suggestive of the circumstances in which he stood. Though it is full of discussions, these are both striking and instructive: the narrative is often uncommonly spirited; and its tone of sadly devout sentiment justifies the



honour that was paid to it by Bishop Hall, in citing it as a signal instance of the blessed uses of adversity.\*

Towards the close of the period, while Lord Clarendon was collecting the materials for his famous royalist history, Thomas May was writing, in the opposite interest, the "History of the Parliament." His work is less polished or eloquent than his poetical tastes might have led us to expect. Then, likewise, amidst more exciting and angry labours, John Milton recorded the early traditions of our country in his "History of England." To real historical value no claim could be made by a work, treating the Roman and Anglo-Saxon periods with the means then accessible. But there reigns through it a spirit of discriminating acuteness, uniting not inharmoniously with the animated pleasure inspired in the poet's mind by the heroic adventures he contemplates.

But, in no instance throughout that disturbed time, would those, who should look no further than the literary results of intellect. b. 1608. }  
d. 1674. } find such reason as in the case of Milton, for lamenting the absorption of extraordinary power in controversies between sects and parties. Some of us indeed will believe that the "Defence of the People of England," against the scurrility of an alien hireling, was, notwithstanding the heavy misdoings of the nation or its chiefs, a duty in the performance of which the highest genius and learning might be not unworthily employed. Others may rejoice, on similar grounds, in the strenuous toil with which the poet laboured in attacks on the hierarchy. But there are several of

\* SIR WALTER RALEIGH.

*From "The History of the World;" published in 1614.*

History hath triumphed over Time, which, besides it, nothing but Eternity hath triumphed over : for it hath carried our knowledge over the vast and devouring space for so many thousand years, and given to our mind such fair and piercing eyes, that we plainly behold living now, as if we had lived then, that great world, *Magni Dei sapiens opus*, the wise work, says Hermes, of a Great God, as it was then when but new in itself. By it it is, I say, that we live in the very time when it was created. We behold how it was governed ; how it was covered with waters and again repeopled ; how kings and kingdoms have flourished and fallen ; and for what virtue and piety God made prosperous, and for what vice and deformity he made wretched, both the one and the other. And it is not the least debt which we owe unto history, that it hath made us acquainted with our dead ancestors, and out of the depth and darkness of the earth delivered us their memory and fame. In a word, we may gather out of history a policy no less wise than eternal, by the comparison and application of other men's forepast miseries with our own like errors and ill-deservings.

his polemical writings which had little value, even in leading or enlightening the opinions of his contemporaries ; and of those which had that effect, two only need to be named. The royalists having, after King Charles's death, published the "Eikon Basilike," or "Royal Image," a clever collection of spurious meditations said to have been written by the unfortunate prince in his imprisonment, Milton dissected the book in his "Eikonoklastes," or "Image-breaker," with great force both of reasoning and eloquence, but with a painful want of forbearance towards the unhappy deceased. It is with different feelings that we turn to his "Areopagitica, a Speech to the Parliament of England, for the Liberty of Unlicensed Printing." This defence of the freedom of the press, triumphant in argument, is one of the noblest and most impressive pieces of eloquence in the English tongue. It may likewise be noted, that the more sedate "Tractate on Education," composed about the same time, aimed likewise, among other objects, at the end designed in the oration ; the convincing of the dominant party in the state, that the suppression of opinions by force was as wrong in them as it had been in those whom they displaced. These two treatises give, in dissimilar shapes, sufficient specimens of Milton's extraordinary power in prose writing. His style is more Latinized than that of his most eloquent contemporaries : the exotic infection pervades both his terms and his arrangement ; and his quaintness is not that of the old idiomatic English. Yet he has passages marvellously sweet, and others in which the grand sweep of his sentences emulates the cathedral-music of Hooker.\*

\* JOHN MILTON.

*From "Areopagitica: a Speech for the Liberty of Unlicensed Printing ;"  
published in 1644.*

I deny not but that it is of greatest concernment in the church and commonwealth, to have a vigilant eye how books demean themselves, as well as men ; and thereafter to confine, imprison, and do sharpest justice on them as malefactors : for books are not absolutely dead things, but do contain a progeny of life in them, to be as active as that soul was whose progeny they are ; nay, they do preserve as in a vial the purest efficacy and extraction of that living intellect that bred them. I know they are as lively, and as vigorously productive, as those fabulous dragons' teeth ; and, being sown up and down, may chance to spring up armed men. And yet, on the other hand, unless wariness be used, as good almost kill a man as kill a good book : who kills a man kills a reasonable creature, God's image ; but he who destroys a good book kills reason itself, kills the image of God, as it were, in the eye. Many a man lives a burden to the earth ; but a good book is the precious lifeblood of a master-spirit, embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life. It is true no age can restore a life, whereof perhaps there is no great loss ;

## MISCELLANEOUS WRITERS.

5. The miscellaneous writings of our eighty years must not be allowed to detain us very long. Such was their variety of form and matter, and so great the ability expended on them, that many pages might be filled by a mere description of their kinds, and the bare names of those who wrote, in each, something that is interesting to the student of literary history. We must content ourselves with learning a few facts, under each of a very few heads.

First may be commemorated briefly Hakluyt and Purchas, our earliest collectors of accounts of voyages; with several travellers who told their own tale, such as Davis, the celebrated navigator, Sandys, whose name we shall meet in the poetical file, and the garrulous and amusing Howell.

After these may stand the Literary Critics, chiefly for the sake  
*b.* 1554. } of the earliest among them, the accomplished Sir Philip  
*d.* 1586. } Sidney. His "Defence of Poesy," written in 1581, is an eloquent and high-minded tribute to the value, moral and intellectual, of the most powerful of all the literary arts. In regard to the distinctive function and character of poetry, it rather evinces fine

and revolutions of ages do not oft recover the loss of a rejected truth, for the want of which whole nations fare the worse.

\* \* \* \* \*

We boast our light: but, if we look not wisely on the sun itself, it smites us into darkness. Who can discern those planets that are oft combust, and those stars of brightest magnitude that rise and set with the sun, until the opposite motion of their orbs bring them to such a place in the firmament where they may be seen evening or morning? The light which we have gained was given us, not to be ever staring on, but by it to discover onward things more remote from our knowledge.

\* \* \* \* \*

Behold now this vast city, a city of refuge, the mansion-house of liberty, encompassed and surrounded with His protection. The shop of war hath not there more anvils and hammers working, to fashion out the plates and instruments of armed justice in defence of beleaguered truth, than there be pens and heads there sitting by their studious lamps, musing, searching, revolving new notions and ideas, wherewith to present, as with their homage and their fealty, the approaching reformation. \* \* Methinks I see in my mind a noble and puissant nation, rousing herself like a strong man after sleep, and shaking her invincible locks: methinks I see her as an eagle renewing her mighty youth, and kindling her undazzled eyes at the full mid-day beam; purging and unscaling her long abused sight at the fountain itself of heavenly radiance; while the whole noise of timorous and flocking birds, with those also that love the twilight, flutter about, amazed at what she means, and in their envious gabble would prognosticate a year of sects and schisms.

intuition, than lays down clear doctrines; but perhaps it did all that could have been hoped for at the time when it appeared.\*

Puttenham's "Art of English Poesie," published five years later, has dawns of critical principles, and, though far from being eloquent, is a creditable attempt at regularity in prose composition. Of his contemporary Webbe it needs only to be said, that he is a vehement advocate of the experiment which then endangered our poetry, of adapting to our tongue the classical metres. A part in one of the prose treatises of Ben Jonson the dramatist entitles him to be ranked, with honour, among the earliest critical writers whose opinions were supported by philosophical thinking.

Our next division will contain Romances and Novels. Here, again, our list opens with Sir Philip Sidney. His "Arcadia" is a ponderous concatenation of romantic and pastoral incidents related in prose, many pieces of verse being interspersed, in imitation of the writer's Italian models. Enjoying a popularity which, long continuing to increase, paved the way for the wearisome French romances, it has in modern times received all varieties of estimate, from enthusiastic admiration to surly contempt. Unreadable as a whole by any but very warm lovers of genius, it is the unripe pro-

\* SIR PHILIP SIDNEY.

*From the "Defence of Poesy:" written in 1581.*

There is no art delivered to mankind, that hath not the works of nature for its principal object; without which they could not consist, and on which they so depend, as they become actors and players, as it were, of what nature will have set forth. \* \* Only the Poet, disdaining to be tied to any such subjection, lifted up with the vigour of his own invention, doth grow in effect into another nature; in making things either better than nature bringeth forth, or, quite anew, forms such as never were in nature, as the heroes, demi-gods, cyclops, chimeras, furies, and such like: so as he goeth hand in hand with nature, not enclosed within the narrow warrant of her gifts, but freely ranging within the zodiac of his own wit. Nature never set forth the earth in so rich tapestry as diverse poets have done; neither with so pleasant rivers, fruitful trees, sweet-smelling flowers, nor whatsoever else may make the too-much-loved earth more lovely. Her world is brazen: the poets only deliver a golden. Neither let it be deemed too saucy a comparison, to balance the highest point of man's wit with the efficacy of nature. But rather give right honour to the Heavenly Maker of that maker; who, having made man to his own likeness, set him beyond and over all the works of that second nature; which in nothing he showed so much as in poetry, when with the force of a divine breath he bringeth things forth surpassing her doings; with no small arguments to the incredulous of that first accursed fall of Adam; since our erect wit maketh us know what perfection is, and yet our infected will keepeth us from reaching unto it.



duction of a young poet, and abounds in isolated passages alike beautiful in sentiment and in language.

A little later, the press began to pour forth shoals of short novels and romances, sometimes collected into sets, and embracing both original compositions and translations. They were chiefly the hasty effusions of the readiest or most needy in that large crowd of professional authors, who abounded in London from about the beginning of our period, and among whom were nearly all the dramatists. The most indefatigable, and one of the most ingenious, of these novel-writers, was the unfortunate play-writer, Robert Greene; one or two of whose pieces derive a painful interest from telling, doubtless with Byronic disguises, romantic but discreditable incidents in the author's dissipated career. From his novels, and others of the class, Shakspeare borrowed not a few of his plots. But the most whimsical of all of them were the two parts of a strange kind of novel, written by the dramatist Lyly: "Euphues, the Anatomy of Wit;" and "Euphues his England." The affectations, both of thought and language, which were the staple of these exceedingly fashionable pieces, doubtless corrupted the diction of good society, and certainly were not without their effect on literature. Sir Percie Shafton's speeches, in "The Monastery," are a poor imitation of them: they may be better understood from the parodies of them in "Love's Labour Lost." This class of writings has no interest, calling for a further prosecution of their history. But they continued to be produced freely, till the civil war brought them to a stand.

The Pamphlets of the time might deserve a chapter for themselves. Written for the day, and to earn the day's bread, they treated every theme that arose, from public occurrences to private eccentricities, from historical facts to apocryphal marvels. From the beginning to the end, very many of them were polemical; and this employment of them may be instanced from three controversies. The earliest of these regarded the moral lawfulness of the stage. It was keenly conducted, on both sides, from the time when Shakspeare's works began to appear, several of the smaller dramatists taking an active part in it: and it had not quite died away when, in the time of Charles the First, it was prosecuted in a more ambitious form by Prynne, who was punished so cruelly for the animadversions on the court, thrown out in his "Histriomastix" or "Player's Scourge." The second war of pamphlets raged in Queen Elizabeth's time. Its character is signified by the name of the imaginary person who was the mouth-piece of one of the parties. He was called "Martin Mar-prelate." The third series of hostilities



might perhaps deserve a more dignified place, on account of the celebrity of some persons concerned in it. It was opened in the beginning of the Troubles, by the appearance of a pamphlet attacking episcopacy, and bearing the signature of Smectymnuus; a name indicating by initials the names of the five presbyterian writers, among whom Edmund Calamy was the most famous. In the battle which followed, Bishop Hall fought on the one side, and John Milton on the other.

6. A very large number of the Miscellaneous writings might be classed together as Essays: and the frequency and popularity of such attempts show how busy and restless men's minds were, and how widely thought expatiated over all objects of interest. A great many of these effusions assumed something like a dramatic shape, taking the form of descriptive sketches of character; a fact, again, symptomatic of another feature of the times, that love of action and lively sympathy with practical energy, out of which the Old English Drama extracted the strength that inspired it.

The two kinds of Essays, the Descriptive and the Didactic, may be considered separately.

Small books of the former class, beginning to be written early in Elizabeth's reign, were abundant throughout the seventeenth century. They may have been suggested by Greek models; but their cast was always original, and their tone very various. Of the lightest and least elevated kind was one of the earliest that can here be named, "The Gull's Hornbook" of the dramatist Dekker, which is a picture of low society in London. Of others, entertaining more serious aims, examples are furnished by sketches of Hall and Fuller, already mentioned. One of the most famous and lively books of the sort was the "Characters" of the unfortunate Sir Thomas Overbury, the dependent and victim of James's minion, Somerset: and among later attempts were the "Resolves" of Feltham, and the "Microcosmography" attributed to Bishop Earle.

The Didactic series begins with a valuable work of a great man; Bacon's fifty-eight "Essays, or Counsels Civil and Moral." In this volume the active-minded writer sets down his thoughts on man and nature, on life and death, on religion and polity, on learning and art. It was a favourite work of his own, and has made his manner of thinking known to many who are ignorant of his systematized philosophy. In the elaborated shape in which we read them, the Essays are not less attractive for the fulness of imagination that fills them with stately pictures, than for the reach of reflective thought that makes them suggest so many valuable truths. But it is a fact worth remembering, that the few Essays which were

first published, wanted almost altogether the illustrative enrichment which the whole series now presents. This development of reasoning power before imagination, although it is the exception, has several parallels: it was a distinctive feature in the mental history of Dryden and of Burke.\*

Among the Didactic Essays of the time after Bacon, may justly be included the "Table-Talk" of the learned Selden, not for the bulk of the book, but for its mixture of apophthegmatic wisdom and lively wit. Two of his contemporaries have transmitted to us in this shape a much greater number of words, if not a larger quantity of knowledge. Robert Burton's undigested farrago, called "The Anatomy of Melancholy," became famous on its being discovered that Sterne had stolen from it largely: and, as irregular in taste as in judgment, as far deficient in good writing as in power of consecutive reasoning, it can never do more than serving patient readers as a storehouse of odd learning and quaintly original ideas.

\* FRANCIS BACON.

*From the "Essays: or Counsels Civil and Moral:" first published in 1597; revised and augmented till 1625.*

I had rather believe all the fables in the Legend, and the Talmud, and the Alcoran, than that this universal frame is without a Mind. And therefore God never wrought miracle to convince Atheism; because his ordinary works convince it. It is true that a little philosophy inclineth man's mind to Atheism; but depth in philosophy bringeth men's minds about to Religion: for, while the mind of man looketh upon second causes scattered, it may sometimes rest in them and go no farther; but, when it beholdeth the chain of them, confederate and linked together, it must needs fly to Providence and Deity. \* \* The Scripture saith, "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God:" it is not said, "The fool hath thought in his heart:" so as he rather saith it by rote to himself, as that he would have, than that he can thoroughly believe it or be persuaded of it. For none deny there is a God, but those for whom it maketh that there were no God. \* \* But the great Atheists, indeed, are hypocrites; which are ever handling holy things, but without feeling. \* \* They that deny a God, destroy man's nobility: for certainly man is of kin to the beasts by his body: and, if he be not akin to God by his spirit, he is a base and ignoble creature. It destroys likewise magnanimity and the raising of human nature: for, take an example of a dog, and mark what a generosity and courage he will put on when he finds himself maintained by a man, who to him is instead of a God or *Melior Natura*: which courage is manifestly such, as that creature, without that confidence of a better nature than his own, could never attain. So man, when he resteth and assureth himself upon Divine protection and favour, gathereth a force and faith, which human nature in itself could not obtain. Therefore, as Atheism is in all respects hateful, so in this, that it depriveth human nature of the means to exalt itself above human frailty.

In some respects not unlike Burton, but very far above him both b. 1605. }  
d. 1682. } in eloquence and in strength of thought, is Sir Thomas Browne, the favourite author of not a few among the admirers of our older literature. In point of style, his writings present to us, in the last stage of our Old English period, all the distinctive characteristics of the age in a state of extravagant exaggeration. The quaintness of phrase is more frequent and more deeply ingrained than ever: terms are coined from the Latin mint with a licence that acknowledges no interdict; and the construction of sentences puts on an added cumbrousness. But the thoughtful melancholy of feeling, the singular mixture of scepticism and credulity in belief, and the brilliancy of imaginative illustration, give to his essays, and especially to that which has always been the most popular, a peculiarity of character that makes them exceedingly fascinating. "The Religio Medici," says Johnson, "was no sooner published, than it excited the attention of the public by the novelty of paradoxes, the dignity of sentiment, the quick succession of images, the multitude of abstruse allusions, the subtlety of disquisition, and the strength of language."\*

Readers who delight in startling contrasts could not be more easily gratified, than by turning from Browne to the prose writings b. 1605. }  
d. 1668. } of the poet Cowley. His eleven short "Discourses by way of Essays, in Prose and Verse," the latest of all his works, show an equal want of ambition in the choice of topics and in the manner of dealing with them. The titles, describing objects of a

\* SIR THOMAS BROWNE.

*From the "Hydriotaphia, or Urn-Burial:" published in 1648.*

Pyramids, arches, obelisks, were but the irregularities of vain-glory, and wild enormities of ancient magnanimity. But the most magnanimous resolution rests in the Christian religion, which trampleth upon pride and sits on the neck of ambition, humbly pursuing that infallible perpetuity, unto which all others must diminish their diameters, and be poorly seen in angles of contingency. Pious spirits, who passed their days in raptures of futurity, made little more of this world than the world that was before it, while they lay obscure in the chaos of preordination and night of their fore-beings.

To subsist in lasting monuments, to live in their productions, to exist in their names and predicament of chimeras, was large satisfaction unto old expectations, and made one part of their elysiums. But all this is nothing in the metaphysics of true belief. To live indeed is to be again ourselves; which being not only a hope but an evidence in noble believers, it is all one to lie in Saint Innocent's churchyard as in the sands of Egypt; ready to be anything, in the ecstasy of being ever, and as content with six feet as the *molēs* of Adrianus.

common-place kind, but possessing interest for every one, fulfil the promise which they hold out, by introducing us to a few obvious though judicious reflections, set off by a train of thoughtfully placid feeling. The style calls for especial attention. Noted in his poems for fantastic affectation of thought generating great obscurity of phrase, Cowley writes prose with undeviating simplicity and perspicuity: and the whole cast of his language, not in diction only, but in construction, has a smoothness and ease, and an approach to tasteful regularity, of which hardly an instance, and certainly none of such extent, could be produced from any other book written before the Restoration.\*

\* ABRAHAM COWLEY.

*From the Essay "Of Solitude."*

The first minister of state has not so much business in public, as a wise man has in private: if the one have little leisure to be alone, the other has less leisure to be in company: the one has but part of the affairs of one nation, the other all the works of God and Nature under his consideration. There is no saying shocks me so much as that, which I hear very often, that a man does not know how to pass his time. 'Twould have been but ill spoken by Methusalem in the nine-hundred-sixty-ninth year of his life: so far it is from us, who have not time enough to attain to the utmost perfection of any part of any science, to have cause to complain that we are forced to be idle for want of work. But this, you'll say, is work only for the learned: others are not capable either of the employments or divertisements that arrive from letters. I know they are not; and therefore cannot much recommend solitude to a man totally illiterate. But, if any man be so unlearned, as to want entertainment of the little intervals of accidental solitude, which frequently occur in almost all conditions, (except the very meanest of the people, who have business enough in the necessary provisions for life,) it is truly a great shame, both to his parents and himself. For a very small portion of any ingenious art will stop up all those gaps of our time. Either music, or painting, or designing, or chymistry, or history, or gardening, or twenty other things, will do it usefully and pleasantly; and, if he happen to set his affections on Poetry, (which I do not advise him too immoderately,) that will overdo it: no wood will be thick enough to hide him from the importunities of company or business, which would abstract him from his beloved.

Hail, old patrician trees, so great and good!  
Hail, ye plebeian underwood,  
Where the poetic birds rejoice,  
And, for their quiet nests and plenteous food,  
Pay with their grateful voice!

Here Nature does a house for me erect,  
Nature the wisest architect,  
Who those fond artists does despise,  
That can the fair and living trees neglect,  
Yet the dead timber prize.

Here let me, careless and unthoughtful lying,  
Hear the soft winds, above me flying,  
With all their wanton boughs dispute,  
And the more tuneful birds to both replying;  
Nor be myself too mute.

A silver stream shall roll his waters near,  
Gilt with the sunbeams here and there,  
On whose enamell'd bank I'll walk,  
And see how prettily they smile, and hear  
How prettily they talk.

All wretched and too solitary he  
Who loves not his own company!  
He'll feel the weight of't many a day,  
Unless he call in Sin or Vanity  
To help to bear't away!



## CHAPTER VI.

## THE AGE OF SPENSER, SHAKSPEARE, BACON, AND MILTON.

A. D. 1558—A. D. 1660.

## SECTION FOURTH: THE DRAMATIC POETRY.

INTRODUCTION. 1. The Drama a Species of Poetry—Recitation of Narrative Poems and Plays—Effects of Recitation on the Character of the Works—Relations of Prose and Verse to Poetry.—2. The Regular and Irregular Schools of Dramatic Art—The French Rules—The Unities of Time and Place—Their Principle—Their Effects.—3. The Unity of Action—Its Principle—Its Relations to the Other Unities—The Union of Tragedy and Comedy.—SHAKSPEARE AND THE OLD ENGLISH DRAMA. 4. Its Four Stages.—5. The First Stage—Shakspeare's Predecessors and Earliest Works—Marlowe—Greene.—6. Shakspeare's Earliest Histories and Comedies—Character of the Early Comedies.—7. The Second Stage—Shakspeare's Later Histories—His Best Comedies.—8. The Third Stage—Shakspeare's Great Tragedies—His Latest Works.—9. Estimate of Shakspeare's Genius.—MINOR DRAMATIC POETS. 10. Shakspeare's Contemporaries—Their Genius—Their Morality.—11. Beaumont and Fletcher.—12. Ben Jonson.—13. Minor Dramatists—Middleton—Webster—Heywood—Dekker.—14. The Fourth Stage of the Drama—Massinger—Ford—Shirley—Moral Declension.

## INTRODUCTION.

1. SHAKSPEARE, the greatest of the great men who have created the imaginative literature of the English language, is so commonly spoken of as a poet, that it can hardly surprise any of us to hear the name of Poetry given to such works as those amongst which his are classed. But we ought to make ourselves familiar with the principle which this way of speaking involves.

The Drama, in all its kinds and forms, is properly to be considered as a kind of Poetry. A Tragedy is a poem, just as much as an Epic or an Ode. It is not here possible, either to prove this cardinal doctrine of criticism, or to set it forth with those explanations by which the practical application of it ought to be guarded. It must be enough to assert peremptorily, that Spenser and Milton, our masters of the chivalrous and the religious epos, are not more

imperatively subject to the laws of the poetical art, than are Shakspeare, and Jonson, and Beaumont and Fletcher, and the other founders and builders of our dramatic poetry. The Epic and the Drama are alike representations of human action and suffering, of human thought, and feeling, and desire; and they are representations whose purposes are so nearly akin, that the processes used are, amidst many secondary diversities, subject primarily to the same theoretical laws.

Modern habits cause the Narrative poem and the Dramatic to wear a greater appearance of dissimilarity than they wore in older times. We consider the one as designed to be read, the other as designed to be acted. Before the invention of printing, and long afterwards, recitation was the mode of communication used for both. The romance, in which the poet told his tale in his own person, was chanted by the minstrel; just as the morality or miracle-play, in which every word was put into the mouths of the characters, was declaimed by the monks or their assistants. Our recollection of this fact suggests several considerations. It is exceedingly probable that the expectation, which our middle-age poets must have had, of this recitative use of their works, may have been one chief cause of the vigorous animation which atones for so many of their irregularities. It is at all events certain, that a similar feeling acted powerfully on those dramatic poets, whose progress we are now about to study. All of them wrote for the stage: none of them, not even Shakspeare himself, wrote for the closet. Their having this design tended, beyond doubt, to lower the tone both of their taste and of their morality; but as certainly it was the mainspring of their passionate elasticity, the principal source of the life-like energy which they poured into their dramatic images of human life.

Another doctrine also should be remembered, both for its own importance and for its bearing on the history of our dramatic literature. Works which we are accustomed to call Poems are almost always written in verse. But the distinction between Verse and Prose, a distinction of form only, is no more than secondary: the primary character of a literary work depends on the purpose for which it is designed, the kind of mental state which it is intended to excite in the hearers or readers. Consequently a work which, having a distinctively poetical purpose, is justly describable as a poem, would not cease to deserve the name, though it were to be couched in prose. It would, however, by being so expressed, lose much of its poetical power. The truth of this last assertion has been clearly perceived in all kinds of poetry except the dramatic. No

one would dream of composing an ode in prose ; and the adoption of that form for a narrative poem is an experiment which, though it has been tried, as in the *Telemachus* of Fenelon, has never been successful. But metrical language has not always prevailed in the drama. In our own country, the example of Shakspeare has fortunately preserved Tragedy from the intrusion of prose : no man of genius has ever written an English tragic drama in any other form but that of verse ; and even the infrequent intermixture of prose, in which our great dramatist indulges, has not found many imitators. But, with us as elsewhere, prose has gradually become almost universal as the form of language in Comedy. Now, this class of dramas, by reason of its comparative lowness of purpose, has in its own nature a much stronger tendency than the other, to sink below the poetical sphere : and it is, in a degree yet greater, liable to that risk of moral corruption, by which the drama of Modern Europe has always been beset. Both of these dangers are aggravated by the use of prose. Comedy, on decisively adopting this form, not only loses more rapidly its poetical and imaginative character, but becomes more readily a minister and teacher of evil. The fact is pertinently illustrated by the state of the comic stage in the time of Charles the Second : and the better period with which we are at present engaged does not want proofs of it, proofs especially strong in their bearing on the moral part of the question. Even for Comedy, verse continued to be the prevalent form of expression till the fall of the Old Drama : prose was introduced but occasionally, though oftener than in Tragedy. The poetical declension, however, caused by the writing of whole dramas in prose, is exemplified in comedies of Ben Jonson : and, of the coarse indecencies that deform so many of our old plays, a large majority (and those the worst) are written in prose, as if the poets had been ashamed to invest them with the garb of verse.

2. Before beginning to consider the works of Shakspeare and his fellow-dramatists, we must still pause for a moment. They will be better understood if we know a little as to certain peculiarities, which distinguish the Old English Drama from that of some other nations.

When our National Drama is described as Romantic, in contradistinction to the Classical Drama, whose masterpieces were framed in ancient Greece, principles are implied which relate to the poetical spirit and tone of the works, and which are applicable to all kinds of poetry. The inquiry into these lies beyond our competency.

When the English Drama is called Irregular, and contrasted with the Regular Drama of Greece, and of modern France, the comparison is founded on differences of form. In regard to these it is well we should learn something. The epithet given to our dramatic

works intimates that they do not obey certain rules, which, it is alleged, are observed by those of the other class. We cannot here attempt to take account of the Greek Drama; nor are we called on to do so. We know enough when we are told, that its forms were the models on which the French forms were founded; but that, in more than one important respect, the true character of the ancient works was misapprehended by the imitators; and that, especially, the drama of France became a thing very different from its supposed original, by refusing to adopt its chorus or lyrical element, while it adopted those other forms which had their just effect only when the chorus was used along with them.

To criticise Shakspeare according to the French dramatic rules, is really to judge him by a code of laws, which had not been enacted when he wrote. The critics by whom the Parisian theory of dramatic art was systematized, belonged to the reign of Louis the Fourteenth: and Corneille, the earliest of the great dramatists of France, and himself hardly an adherent of the regular school, was a child when our poet died. Nevertheless the foreign standard has so often been applied to our old drama, that some knowledge of its principles is required by way of introduction; and, indeed, the dramatic forms of Greece and Rome were neither quite unknown in Shakspeare's time nor altogether unimitated.

The principal law of the French system prescribed obedience to the Three Unities, of Time, Place, and Action.

The first two of these rest on a principle quite different from that which is involved in the third. They were founded on a desire to make each drama imitate as closely as possible the series of events which it represents. If this aim were to be prosecuted with strict consistency, the incidents constituting the story of a play ought to be such, that all of them, if real, might have occurred during the two or three hours occupied in the acting; and, the stage actually remaining the same, the place of the action represented ought to remain unchanged from beginning to end. But, the composition of a drama so cramped being the next thing to an impossibility, some relaxation of the statute was needed and allowed: the time of the action, it was decreed, (somewhat arbitrarily,) might extend to twenty-four hours; and the scene might be shifted from place to place in the same city. By Shakspeare, on the other hand, and by most of his contemporaries, no fixed limits whatever were acknowledged, in regard either of time or of place. In some of his plays, though not in any of his greatest, the action stretches through many years: in all of them the scene is shifted frequently, and sometimes to very wide distances.



Now, if the dramatic art has for its paramount aim the imparting to the spectators the pleasure which they may receive from contemplating exact imitations of reality, we ought surely to refuse to the dramatist even the slender concessions granted him by the French critics. If, on the contrary, the drama aims at imparting some pleasure which is higher than this, the value of close adherence to reality ought to be estimated according to the effect which it may have in promoting that higher end. The latter is undoubtedly the true state of the case; and, without insisting on having a very clear apprehension of the nature of the end really aimed at by the drama, we shall perhaps be disposed to believe that the attainment of that end may be impeded, equally, by a slavish imitation of the realities of time and place, and by a wanton and frequent deviation from them. If this is the tendency of our opinion, it will be strengthened by a glance at the third section of the French law.

3. The rule prescribing unity of action, is founded on a principle much sounder than that which supports the other two. The phrase imports a requirement that the action or story of a drama shall be one, not two actions or more; and that, by consequence, every thing introduced shall be treated as subordinate to the series of events which is taken as the guiding thread. The doctrine thus expounded is not only true, but holds in regard to every process by which we design to effect any change on the minds of others. The poet, whether in narrative or dramatic composition, aims at conveying to his audience such suggestions, as shall enable them to imagine for themselves promptly and vividly the series of events he describes, and to experience strongly the train of emotions which has passed through his own mind. It is a truth not only evident, but exemplified sometimes in the works of Shakspeare himself, that a total neglect of the unities of time and place exposes the poet to a risk of losing unity of action altogether; or that, if it does not go so far as this, it issues in his having only a unity so complex and so little obvious, that the observer may find it difficult to grasp it, and may lose altogether the train of feeling which is intended to issue from the apprehension of it. Yet, in most of our great poet's works, and in not a few other dramas of his time, this unity of impression (as it has aptly been called) is not only preserved with obvious mastery, but becomes instinctively perceptible through the harmonious repose of feeling in which the work leaves us at its close. On the other hand, the punctilious observance of the two minor unities does really not carry with it advantages so decisive as we might suppose. The imagination, the power appealed to, yields with wonderful flexibility when the poetic plea-



sure begins to dawn on the mind : and the prosaic scale of reality is utterly forgotten, unless critics dispel the dream of fancy by recalling it. Indeed it is further true, that the first and second unities, as managed in the French school, go much farther than the most outrageous of our English licences, in impairing the general effect of the works. They carry with them, unless in a few felicitous instances, a bareness of story, a difficulty of devising means of fully developing passion and character, and a consequent necessity of constant recourse to little artificial expedients, which are disappointingly apt to chill both fancy and emotion, in all minds but those that are fortified by habitual prepossessions.

There is another doctrine of the French school, to which our old dramatists paid still less regard than to the unities. It forbade the union of Tragedy and Comedy in the same piece. This prohibition is a practical corollary from the law which enjoins unity of action : but, like several other rules laid down in the same quarter, it violates the spirit of the law by formal adherence to the letter. Every drama ought to be characteristically either a tragedy or a comedy : a work as to which we are left in doubt whether it is the one or the other, cannot have produced either a forcible or an harmonious impression on us. There are instances in which it may fairly be doubted, whether Shakspeare himself has not thus failed. But there does not seem to be any good reason, why a work of the one class should not admit subordinate elements borrowed from the other. The refusal of the permission narrows very disadvantageously the field which tragedy is entitled to occupy, as a picture of human life in which the serious and sad are relieved by being contrasted with the gay : it lowers the tone of comedy, both in its poetical and in its moral relations.

#### SHAKSPEARE AND THE OLD ENGLISH DRAMA.

4. All the events which we are called on here to notice in the history of the Old English Drama, are comprehended in a period of little more than sixty years, beginning about 1585, and closing in 1645. Before the first of these dates, no very perceptible advance had been made beyond the point which we had previously observed : the second of the dates is that of the shutting up of the theatres on the breaking out of the Civil War. For the whole of this period, we may take the history of Shakspeare's works as our leading thread. Men of eminent genius lived around and after him : but there were none who do not derive much of their importance from the relation in which they stand to him ; and there were hardly

any whose works do not owe much of their excellence to the influence of his.

Thus considered, the stages through which the Drama passed may be said to have been four, unequal in endurance and very unlike in character. Three of them may be regarded as having chiefly occurred during his life, the fourth as falling wholly after his death.\*

5. The first of these witnessed the early manhood of Shakspeare. The year already noted as its commencement was the twenty-first of his age: it comes to a close about 1593, being the earliest date which is universally admitted as belonging to any of his characteristic works.

It should be observed, in the outset, that there were at this time court-dramas, to which alone persons of rank condescended to give attention. Of these the most fashionable were the comedies of John Lyly, productions not without value, but distinguished both by fantastic unreality in the plots, and by those strained affectations of style which we have already noted in his "Euphues." The courtiers patronized also dull tragedies on the classical model; some of which were translated from the French, while the most famous of the original writers was the poet Daniel.

The popular dramas were quite unlike these. They were composed by a knot of men, several of whom possessed genius so distinguished, as to make us regret deeply that their lives should have been wasted in idle pamphlet-writing, and in the composition of plays framed on rough and faulty models. Yet these were the teachers, the immediate predecessors, and the earliest coadjutors of Shakspeare. The character of the class may be fairly understood, if three writers are taken as its representatives: the unfortunate Christopher Marlowe; the equally unfortunate Robert Greene; and the author of the Three Parts of Henry the Sixth, which are usually, and probably with good reason, inserted among Shakspeare's works. Peele's name, though valuable to the literary antiquary, is less important than any of these. His chief merit lay in his improvement of dramatic verse.

b. 1562. } Marlowe's plays are stately Tragedies, serious and so-  
d. 1593. } lemn in purpose, energetic and often extravagant in pas-  
sion, with occasional touches of deep pathos, and in language  
richly and even pompously imaginative. His "Tragical History  
of Doctor Faustus" is one of the finest poems in our language.  
Greene's are loose Legendary Plays, of a form which is exemplified  
in Cymbeline. They are fanciful or fantastic rather than dramatic

\* Edinburgh Review, vol. lxxi.: 1840.

in design, romantic in sentiment, and not unlike the metrical romances in their complication, hurry, and confusion of incident. Of Henry the Sixth, it is enough to say that it is a kind of fore-taste, a rudimental outline, of Shakspeare's later Historical Plays; and that it is obviously distinguished from them by wanting the comic elements, and, indeed, all that is purely imaginary.

All these three kinds of dramas, the tragedies of Marlowe, the romantic pictures of Greene, and the chivalrous panoramas of the Historical Plays, were clearly the offspring of the inartificial old drama which had so long been native in England. Although some of the authors were scholars, learning furnished none of their models. But, if they inherited from the writers of the morals and miracle-plays their defiance of the unities, and their prevalent disregard for regularity of plan, they had suddenly attained, as if it had been by a happy instinct, a wonderfully just conception of the true function of the drama, as a representation of human life, intended to excite interest and awaken reflective pleasure. It is important likewise to remember, that they profited eagerly by Surrey's introduction of blank verse. They adopted it at once, improved it with extraordinary skill, and owed to it in great part the remarkable success which they reached in uniting imaginative richness with freedom and force of dramatic imitation.

b. 1564. } 6. If it is right to assign Henry the Sixth wholly to Shak-  
d. 1616. } speare, this fine group of dramas might by itself account well for his time, till his twenty-ninth or thirtieth year. But, throwing doubtful questions aside, we can positively assert his having composed, in this earliest period of his author-life, three other works, all Comedies and still extant. The first is *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, which we probably possess in its original shape: another is the *Comedy of Errors*, which likewise does not seem to have ever been remodelled: and the third is *Love's Labour Lost*, which subsequently underwent many changes before it assumed the form in which it now survives. There are likewise two of the great Tragedies, which, although the edition in which we commonly read them was framed much later, were first written in this early period, in a form which, by fortunate accidents, is still in existence. The one is *Hamlet*, of which the older version is little more than a sketch: the other is *Romeo and Juliet*, which was altered much less.

In the little we have thus learned about the other dramas of the time, there is enough to show that the mighty master, even in these his juvenile essays, had taken a wide step beyond them all. It is a fact especially to be remarked, that, in already attempting comedy, and in bringing it into a shape which he himself never

much improved, he was doing that which was more difficult than anything else he could have aimed at. For of pure comedy it may safely be asserted, that it had no existence in England till he created it.

It would be an employment at once interesting and conducive to improvement in criticism, to compare these early works with those of the poet's full maturity, in respect of the views of life which the two eras respectively exhibit. Here, it will be evident, everything is still juvenile and unripe: the world in its externals, and the heart and intellect and character of man, are alike known but vaguely and from the distance. The comic characters are by far the most distinctly conceived: the power of observation was already so far developed in the young poet's mind, that he could apply his knowledge to the act of invention felicitously and freely, when he did not need to do more than embellishing the actual with pleasant wit or grotesque humour. But his reflective faculty was not yet enough practised, his imagination not yet possessed deeply enough by the shapes which serious feeling afterwards prompted, to enable him to create elevated character, or to venture on a broad and bold cast of incident. The first of the comedies that have been named is a slight and careless tale of fickleness in love, among personages who have perhaps less of individuality than any others that the poet ever drew. The second is an ingenious comedy of intrigue, that is, a play dependent for its interest on the combination and gradual unravelling of perplexing incidents: and this is pretty nearly its greatest merit. The other rises higher into the world of poetry: but its whimsically original mimicry of chivalry and romance has an air of unreality and coldness; and the poet is nowhere so much at his ease as in ridiculing the little affectations which his observation had shown him, in manners, in feeling, and in the fashion of language.

Marvellously unlike is all this to the grand pictures of life, which he soon afterwards began to paint: pictures which group all their characters, whether elevated or mean, in situations exciting universal sympathies; pictures whose tone of sentiment, whether serious or comic, is always coloured by the finest poetic light; pictures which, from the deepest tragedy to the broadest farce, we cannot behold without being forced to meditate on some of the most important problems of human life and action.

7. If Shakspeare was more than the scholar in that stage of his progress which we have now considered, he was indisputably the teacher and model ever after. We may set down a second period for him and for the drama, as extending, from the point at which we



last left him, to his thirty-sixth year, or till about 1600. This was, so far as existing works are the evidence, the most active part of his literary life : indeed the number of works which flowed from his pen during those seven or eight years, might strengthen the current notion of his carelessness in writing, if we did not know positively that, in some of his dramas at least, the pointedness and strength were reached by laborious correction.

The most elevated works of those years were his magnificent series of Historical Plays, or, as they were called, Histories. Then were written all of them except Henry the Sixth and Henry the Eighth, a collection of six plays in all. Of Comedies the period produced, before 1598, four at least : The Taming of the Shrew, the Midsummer-Night's Dream, All's Well that Ends Well, and The Merchant of Venice. Also, either about that year or very soon after it, there appeared four other Comedies ; Much Ado about Nothing, As You Like It, Twelfth Night, and the Merry Wives of Windsor. Towards the end of the time Romeo and Juliet was re-written.

If the poet's career had closed at this point, his place would have been the highest in our literature, yet not so high as it is. Those works which have just been enumerated, as belonging to his middle stage, are distinguished, much more than the later ones, by variety in the views of life which they present to us. But the loftiest and most earnest views of all, those which open up the world of tragedy, were but dawning in his mind at the commencement of this period, when the early Hamlet had just been composed : they gradually became familiar to him in those bold combinations which his historical pieces suggested : and, in the Romeo and Juliet, they exhibit themselves with a clearness and force which presaged a new era. The ruling temper of the poet's mind was the cheerful and hopeful one, which gives birth to genuine comedy, and which, in that mind, as in none other, had its images coloured by the gorgeous hues of poetic fancy. Never, either before or afterwards, did he cherish that purely comic train of thought and invention, at once real and dramatic, poetical and passionate, which flowed and ebbed through his mind like a mighty sea during the last few years of the sixteenth century. The variety of characters and scenes which then rose up before him, is altogether marvellous. The extremes are instanced in the fairy loveliness of the Midsummer-Night's Dream ; the woodland romance of As You Like It ; the harmonious blending of fanciful gaiety, sympathetic sorrow, and satirical mirth, which runs through Much Ado about Nothing ; and the yet bolder union of dissimilar materials, which, in The



Merchant of Venice, raises us almost to the height of tragic terror.

8. Shakspeare's last days were his greatest. His skill as an artist was perfected: his poetic imagination was full to overflowing: his power of conceiving and representing passion was, if less intense, at least under more thorough control. Yet it is not chimerical to think, that there is spread over most of the works of those last fifteen years a tone of sadness which had not been perceived before.

The series after 1600 began with the remaining four of the five great Tragedies: *Othello*, the sternest and gloomiest of all his dramas, coming first; the re-composed *Hamlet* following, and being succeeded by *Lear*; and *Macbeth* appearing before 1610. To the same decade belong *Henry the Eighth*; the three Roman tragedies of *Coriolanus*, *Julius Cæsar*, and *Antony and Cleopatra*; and those two singular pieces, *Timon of Athens*, and *Troilus and Cressida*, which almost strike us as parodies both on the drama and on human life. A similar jarring of feeling in the poet's mind is traceable in *Measure for Measure*, which in all likelihood is nearly of the same date. But his genius next assumed a new temper, probably after he had retired from the turmoil of his harassing profession to the repose of his early home in the country. Amidst the soothing influences of nature and solitude, anxiety and despondence gave place to a tone of placidly thoughtful imagination, worthy to close the days of the greatest among poets. In *Cymbeline* and the *Winter's Tale*, he fell back on that legendary kind of adventures, which had occupied the stage so frequently in his youth: and in *The Tempest*, which we have good reason to suppose his last work, he peopled his haunted island with a group of beings, whose conception indicates a greater variety of imagination, and in some points a greater depth of philosophic thought, than any other characters or events which he has bequeathed to us.

9. "The name of Shakspeare is the greatest in our literature: it is the greatest in all literature. No man ever came near him in the creative powers of the mind: no man had ever such strength at once, and such variety of imagination. The number of characters in his plays is astonishingly great: yet he never takes an abstract quality to embody it, scarcely perhaps a definite condition of manners, as Jonson does. Nor did he draw much from living models: there is no manifest appearance of personal caricature in his comedies; though in some slight traits of character this may not improbably have been the case. Compare with him Homer,

the tragedians of Greece, the poets of Italy, Plautus, Cervantes, Molière, Addison, Le Sage, Fielding, Richardson, Scott, the romancers of the elder or later schools: one man has far more than surpassed them all. Others may have been as sublime; others may have been more pathetic; others may have equalled him in grace and purity of language, and have shunned some of his faults: but the philosophy of Shakspeare, his intimate searching out of the human heart, whether in the gnomic form of sentence, or in the dramatic exhibition of character, is a gift peculiarly his own. It is, if not entirely wanting, yet very little manifested in comparison with him, by the English dramatists of his own and the subsequent period.

"These dramatists are hardly less inferior to Shakspeare in judgment. To this quality I particularly advert; because foreign writers, and sometimes our own, have imputed an extraordinary barbarism and rudeness to his works. They belong indeed to an age sufficiently rude and barbarous in its entertainments, and are of course to be classed with what is called the romantic school, which has hardly yet shaken off that reproach. But no one who has perused the plays anterior to those of Shakspeare, or contemporary with them, or subsequent to them down to the closing of the theatres in the civil war, will pretend to deny that there is far less irregularity, in regard to everything where regularity can be desired, in a large proportion of these, (perhaps in all the tragedies,) than in his own. We need only repeat the names of *The Merchant of Venice*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Macbeth*, *Othello*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Measure for Measure*. The plots in these are excellently constructed, and in some with uncommon artifice. But, even where an analysis of the story might excite criticism, there is generally an unity of interest which tones the whole. *The Winter's Tale* is not a model to follow; but we feel that the *Winter's Tale* is a single story: it is even managed as such with consummate skill."\*

#### THE MINOR DRAMATIC POETS.

10. When we look away from Shakspeare to his dramatic contemporaries, we find it needless to revert farther than the commencement of the second stage in his history. The fact that was characteristic of the earlier part of the period which then began, was the predominating influence exercised by him, not over those dramatists only who were avowedly his pupils and imitators, but also over those who probably believed that they were quite inde-

\* Hallam: Introduction to the Literature of Europe.

pendent of him. The effects of this influence are not traceable merely in style, in the repetition of scattered reflections and images, or in the imitation, designed or undesigned, of characters and incidents. They show themselves still more in community of sentiment, in general resemblance of plan, and in those finer points of analogy which are more readily felt than described.

It would have been well if there had been as decided a likeness in the moral aspect. Although it cannot seriously be maintained of Shakspeare, that he keeps always before him the highest sanctions of conduct, it is yet true that, if his works were weeded of a very few obnoxious passages, they might be pronounced free from all gross moral taint : while it is likewise the fact, that hardly any imaginative writings, not avowedly religious in structure, are so strongly suggestive as many of his are, of solemn and instructive meditation. In regard to almost all the other dramatists of the time it must be said, that, if they do teach goodness, they teach it in their own despite : and of the men of eminent genius, Ben Jonson alone deserves the praise of having had a steady respect for moral distinctions ; while even with him there is an occasional coarseness not reconcilable with his general practice. The licentiousness began in the earlier years of the seventeenth century ; and it increased with accelerated speed, till dramatic composition came to an enforced pause. Writings having such a character must, in a course of study like ours, be passed over very cursorily. The pleasure which their genius gives can be safely enjoyed only by minds mature and well trained ; unless in such purified specimens, as those which have been placed at the disposal of youthful readers by a man of letters in our own time.\*

11. Highest by far in poetical and dramatic value stand the works  
*b.* 1576. } bearing the names of Beaumont and Fletcher. A great  
*d.* 1625. } many of these are said to have been written by the two  
*b.* 1586. }  
*d.* 1615. } poets jointly, a few by the former alone, and a larger number by the latter after he had lost his friend. Beaumont, the younger of the two, died before he was thirty years old. Alliances of this kind have taken place in no kind of poetry but the dramatic : there they have been common : they were especially so in England at the time now in question, and were often prompted merely by the necessities of the writers. The association of those two poets seems to have been the effect of friendship : but it was soon

<sup>1</sup> Charles Lamb's "Specimens of the English Dramatic Poets." Lamb gives no quotations from Shakspeare's dramas. Nor are any inserted here : the noblest passages may be read in very many books : and inferior ones would do injustice to the great poet.

dissolved ; and it is not easy to mark any decisive change of literary character in the works which were certainly Fletcher's, and written after he had been left alone. It is too certain, however, that the looseness of fancy which deformed all those dramas from the beginning, degenerated afterwards into confirmed and deliberate licentiousness : and it is a circumstance not to be overlooked, that the moral badness which was common to all works of the kind then written, is nowhere so glaring as in these, which were the most finely and delicately imaginative dramas of their day, and are poetically superior to everything of the sort in our language except the works of Shakspeare. There may be quoted from them many short passages, and some entire scenes, as delightful as anything in the range of poetry ; sometimes pleasing by their rich imagery, sometimes by their profound pathos, and not infrequently by their elevation and purity of thought and feeling. But there are very few of the plays whose stories could be wholly told without offence ; and there is none that should be read entirely by a young person.\*

\* FRANCIS BEAUMONT AND JOHN FLETCHER.

*The Prince's description of his Page Bellario, in the play of " Philaster."*

Hunting the buck,

I found him sitting by a fountain's side,  
Of which he borrowed some to quench his thirst,  
And paid the nymph as much again in tears.  
A garland laid him by, made by himself,  
Of many several flowers bred in the bay,  
Stuck in that mystic order, that the rareness  
Delighted me : but, ever when he turned  
His tender eyes upon them, he would weep,  
As if he meant to make 'em grow again.

Seeing such pretty helpless innocence  
Dwell in his face, I asked him all his story.  
He told me that his parents gentle died,  
Leaving him to the mercy of the fields,  
Which gave him roots ; and of the crystal springs,  
Which did not stop their courses ; and the sun,  
Which still, he thanked him, yielded him his light.  
Then took he up his garland, and did show  
What every flower, as country people hold,  
Did signify ; and how all, ordered thus,  
Express'd his grief ; and, to my thoughts, did read  
The prettiest lecture of his country art  
That could be wished : so that methought I could  
Have studied it. I gladly entertained him,  
Who was as glad to follow ; and have got  
The trustiest, loving'st, and the gentlest boy  
That ever master kept.



12. In Beaumont and Fletcher's works, those irregularities of plan, which are often made a reproach to the English drama, reach their utmost height. On the other hand, the regular classical model was approached, as closely as English tastes and habits would b. 1574.  
d. 1637. allow, in not a few of the writings, both tragic and comic, of Ben Jonson. This celebrated man deserves immortality for other reasons, besides his comparative purity of moral sentiment. He was the one man of his time, besides Shakspeare, who deserves to be called a reflective artist; the one man of his time, besides Shakspeare, who perceived principles of art and worked in obedience to them. His tragedies are stately, eloquent, and poetical: his comedies are more faithful poetic portraits of contemporary English life than those of any other dramatist of his age, the one great poet being excepted. His vigour in the conception of character has been generally allowed, and perhaps overvalued. Less justice has been rendered to the union of poetical vigour and delicacy, which pervades almost every thing that he wrote. He is poetical, though not richly imaginative, not in his pastoral of *The Sad Shepherd* only, or in his masques, or in his beautiful lyrics. His poetry is perceptible even among the comic scenes of *Every Man in His Humour*, or through the half-heroic perplexities of the *Alchymist* and the *Fox*.\*

\* BEN JONSON.

*From the Comedy of "The New Inn."*

Did you ever know or hear of the Lord Beaufort,  
 Who serv'd so bravely in France? I was his page,  
 And, ere he died, his friend. I follow'd him  
 First in the wars; and in the times of peace  
 I waited on his studies; which were right.  
 He had no Arthurs, nor no Rosicleers,  
 No Knights of the Sun, nor Amadis de Gauls,  
 Primalions and Pantagruels, public nothings,  
 Abortives of the fabulous dark cloister,  
 Sent out to poison courts and infest manners:  
 But great Achilles', Agamemnon's acts,  
 Sage Nestor's counsels and Ulysses' sleights,  
 Tydides' fortitude, as Homer wrought them  
 In his immortal fancy, for examples  
 Of the heroic virtue:—or as Virgil,  
 That Master of the Epic Poëm, limn'd  
 Pious Æneas, his religious prince,  
 Bearing his aged parent on his shoulders,  
 Rapt from the flames of Troy, with his young son.  
 And these he brought to practice and to use.  
 He gave me first my breeding, I acknowledge;  
 Then shower'd his bounties on me, like the Hours,



13. Jonson might be held to have written chiefly for men of sense and knowledge, Fletcher and his friend for men of fashion and the world. A similar audience to that of Jonson may have been aimed at in the stately, epical tragedies of Chapman. The other class of auditors, or one a step lower, would have relished better such plays as those of Middleton and Webster: the former of whom is chiefly remarkable for a few striking ideas imperfectly wrought out; while the latter, in several of his tragic dramas, is singularly successful in depicting events of deep horror.

Along with these men wrote others who, clinging to the older forms and ideas, may be regarded as having been in the main the dramatists of the commonalty. The chief of these was Thomas Heywood, an author of extraordinary industry, who boasted of having in his long life had a share in more than two hundred plays. In some of his best works there is a natural and quiet sweetness, which makes him not undeserving of the title a critic has given him, "the prose Shakspeare;" and he is one of the most moral playwrights of his time. To the same class belonged Dekker, also a voluminous pamphleteer, and known as having co-operated in several plays which appear among the works of more celebrated men, especially Massinger.

14. The name which has last been read, introduces us to that which may be treated as the closing age of the Old English Drama. As its representatives may be taken Massinger, Ford, and Shirley.

b. 1584. } Massinger is by some critics ranked next after Shakspeare.  
d. 1640. } Assuredly, his skill in the representation of character is superior to that of any of the secondary dramatists except Jonson, and his poetical beauty not much less than Fletcher's; while, further, he has a quaint grace of language not known to either. Of pure comedy he gives us hardly anything; and for pure tragedy he wants depth of pathos. But his vigour of portraiture, the chivalrous turn of his stories, the inventive novelty which distinguishes many of his situations and incidents, and the melancholy dignity of his imagery and sentiment, make his finest pieces interesting in the extreme. The theatres have retained, unaltered

That open-handed sit upon the clouds,  
And press the liberality of heaven  
Down to the laps of thankful men! But then,  
The trust committed to me at his death  
Was above all; and left so strong a tie  
On all my powers, as time shall not dissolve,  
Till it dissolve itself, and bury all:  
The care of his brave heir and only son.

his *New Way to Pay Old Debts*, for the sake of its sketch from life in *Sir Giles Overreach*: and his *Fatal Dowry* also has been preserved, in Rowe's plagiarism from it in *The Fair Penitent*. But these are hardly his best works: others, at any rate, exhibit his characteristic peculiarities more strikingly. Such are *The Unnatural Combat*, an extravagant tragedy, in which a son avenges by parricide the murder of his mother; and *The Duke of Milan*, full of variety, and ending in a catastrophe of wildly conceived horror. Such also are *The Bondman*, spirited and rough; *The Picture*, fanciful and romantic; and *The City Madam*, remarkable for the richness of the poetry with which it invests contemporary life, and still more for the energy with which, in the person of Luke, the dramatist depicts the changes caused by circumstances in a character uniting meanness with ambition.\*

It is instructive to note how the low moral tone, if not of the

\* PHILIP MASSINGER.

*From the Tragedy of "The Fatal Dowry."*

*The Marshal of Burgundy having died while imprisoned for debt, his son Charalois surrenders himself to redeem the dead body. He speaks from the prison-door, as the funeral passes, attended by a few soldiers of the deceased as mourners.*

How like a silent stream shaded with night,  
And gliding softly with our windy sighs,  
Moves the whole frame of this solemnity;  
Tears, sighs, and blacks, filling the simile!  
Whilst I, the only murmur in this grove  
Of death, thus hollowly break forth!—Vouchsafe  
To stay awhile.—Rest, rest in peace, dear earth!  
Thou that brought'st rest to their unthankful lives,  
Whose cruelty denied thee rest in death!  
Here stands thy poor executor, thy son,  
That makes his life prisoner to bail thy death;  
Who gladlier puts on this captivity,  
Than virgins long in love their wedding-weeds.

Of all that ever thou hast done good to,  
These only have good memories; for they  
Remember best, forget not gratitude.  
I thank you for this last and friendly love!  
And, though this country, like a viperous mother,  
Not only hath eat up ungratefully  
All means of thee, her son, but last thyself,  
Leaving thy heir so bare and indigent,  
He cannot raise thee a poor monument,  
Such as a flatterer or an usurer hath;  
Thy worth in every honest breast builds one,  
Making their friendly hearts thy funeral stone!

nation, yet at least of those for whom plays were written, is indicated by all these works. With Massinger the most heroic sentiments, rising sometimes, as in his *Virgin Martyr*, into religious rapture, prevail through whole scenes, along with which come others of the grossest ribaldry. By Ford, on the other hand, incidents of the most revolting kind are laid down as the foundation of his plots: and in the representation of these he wastes a pathos and tenderness, which, though lyrical rather than dramatic, are yet deeper than anything elsewhere to be found in our drama.\*

\* JOHN FORD.

*From the Play of "The Lover's Melancholy."*

Passing from Italy to Greece, the tales  
Which poets of an elder time have feign'd  
To glorify their Tempe, bred in me  
Desire of visiting that paradise.  
To Thessaly I came; and, living private,  
Without acquaintance of more sweet companions  
Than the old inmates to my love, my thoughts,  
I day by day frequented silent groves,  
And solitary walks. One morning early  
This accident encountered me. I heard  
The sweetest and most ravishing contention  
That art and nature ever were at strife in.

A sound of music touch'd mine ears, or rather  
Indeed entranc'd my soul. As I stole nearer,  
Invited by the melody, I saw  
This youth, this fair-faced youth, upon his lute,  
With strains of strange variety and harmony,  
Proclaiming (as it seem'd) so bold a challenge  
To the clear quiristers of the woods, the birds,  
That, as they flock'd about him, all stood silent,  
Wond'ring at what they heard. I wonder'd too.

A nightingale,  
Nature's best-skill'd musician, undertakes  
The challenge; and, for every several strain  
The well-shaped youth could touch, she sung her own.  
He could not run division with more art  
Upon his quaking instrument, than she,  
The nightingale, did with her various notes  
Reply to.

Some time thus spent, the young man grew at last  
Into a pretty anger; that a bird,  
Whom art had never taught cleffs, moods, or notes,  
Should vie with him for mastery, whose study  
Had busied many hours to perfect practice:  
To end the controversy, in a rapture,  
Upon his instrument he plays so swiftly,  
So many voluntaries, and so quick,

When we open the pages of Shirley, again, a man of very fine poetic fancy, with an excellent turn for the light comedy of manners, we are tempted to suppose that we must, by mistake, have stumbled on some of the foulest births that appeared in the reign of Charles the Second. Vice is no longer held up as a mere picture : it is indicated, and sometimes directly recommended, as a fit example. When the drama was at length suppressed, the act destroyed a moral nuisance.

That there was curiosity and cunning,  
Concord in discord, lines of diff'ring method  
Meeting in one full centre of delight.  
The bird, (ordain'd to be  
Music's first martyr,) strove to imitate  
These several sounds ; which when her warbling throat  
Fail'd in, for grief down dropt she on the lute  
And brake her heart ! It was the quaintest sadness  
To see the conqueror upon her hearse  
To weep a funeral elegy of tears.

## CHAPTER VII.

## THE AGE OF SPENSER, SHAKSPEARE, BACON, AND MILTON.

A. D. 1558—A. D. 1660.

## SECTION FIFTH : THE NON-DRAMATIC POETRY.

SPENSER'S POETRY. 1. His Genius—His Minor Poems.—2. Spenser's Faerie Queene—Its Design.—3. Allegories of the Faerie Queene—Its Poetical Character.—4. The Stories of the Six Books of the Faerie Queene.—MINOR POETS. 5. The Great Variety in the Kinds of Poetry—Classification of them.—6. Metrical Translations—Marlowe—Chapman—Fairfax—Sandys.—7. Historical Narrative Poems—Shakspeare—Daniel—Drayton—Giles and Phineas Fletcher.—8. Pastorals—Pastoral Dramas of Fletcher and Jonson—Warner—Drayton—Wither—Browne.—9. Descriptive Poems—Drayton's Poly-Olbion—Didactic Poems—Lord Brooke and Davies—Herbert and Quarles—Poetical Satires—Hall—Marston—Donne.—10. Earlier Lyrical Poems—Shakspeare, Fletcher, and Jonson—Ballads—Sonnets of Drummond and Daniel.—11. Lyrical Poems of the Metaphysical School—Donne and Cowley—Lyrics and other Poems of a Modern Cast—Denham and Waller.—MILTON'S POETRY. 12. His Life and Works.—13. His Minor Poems—L'Allegro and Il Penseroso—Comus—Lycidas—Ode on the Nativity—Later Poems—Paradise Regained and Samson Agonistes.—14. The Paradise Lost.

## THE POETRY OF EDMUND SPENSER.

b 1553. } 1. IN our study of the Non-Dramatic Poetry of this period,  
 d. 1599. } the first name we require to learn is that of Spenser, a  
 word of happy omen, one of the most illustrious names in the literary annals of Europe ; the name of

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That gentle Bard,  
 Chosen by the Muses for their Page of State ;  
 Sweet Spenser, moving through his clouded heaven  
 With the moon's beauty and the moon's soft pace.

Among English poets he stands lower only than Shakspeare, and Chaucer, and Milton : and, if we extend the parallel to the continent, his masterpiece is not unworthy of companionship with its Italian



model, the chivalrous epic of Ariosto. But no comparison is needed for endearing, to the pure in heart, works which unite, as few such unite, rare genius with moral purity; or for recommending, to the lovers of poetry, poems which exhibit at once exquisite sweetness and felicity of language, a luxuriant beauty of imagination which has hardly ever been surpassed, and a tenderness of feeling never elsewhere conjoined with an imagination so vivid.

Spenser's earliest works broke in on what may be considered, in the history of our poetry, as a pause in the march of improvement. Since the middle of the century, no more decisive advance had taken place than that which is shown by the homely satire and personal narrative of Gascoigne. In his "Shepherd's Calendar," Spenser, while he exhibited some fruits of his foreign studies, purposely adopted, as a means of gaining truth to nature, a rusticity both of sentiment and of style, which, though ardently admired at the time, does not now seem to have presaged the ideality of his later works. His Italian tastes were further proved by an elaborate series of sonnets; and several other poems of greater extent may, with these, be summarily passed over.

2. We must make ourselves acquainted more closely with his greatest work, a Narrative Poem, which, though it contains many thousand lines, is nevertheless incomplete, no more than half of the original design being executed. It is asserted, on doubtful authority, that the latter half was written, but perished by shipwreck. The diction is not exactly that of the poet's time, being, by an unfortunate error of judgment, studded purposely with phrases and forms that had already become antiquated; and odd expressions are also forced sometimes on the author by the difficulties of the measure he adopted, that fine but complex stanza of nine lines which all of us know in *Childe Harold*.

His magnificent poem is called "The Faerie Queene." The title does in some degree signify the contents; but the notion which it tends to convey is considerably different from the reality. The Fairy Land of Spenser is not the region which we are accustomed to understand by that term. It is indeed a realm of marvels; and there are elves and other supernatural beings among its inhabitants: but these are only its ornaments. It is rather the Land of Chivalry, a country not laid down on any map: a scene in which heroic daring and ideal purity are the objects chiefly presented for our admiration; and in which the principal personages are knights achieving perilous adventures, and ladies rescued from frightful miseries, and enchanters, good and evil, whose spells affect the destiny of those human persons.

The imaginary world of the poem, and the doings and sufferings of its denizens, are, in a word, those of the chivalrous romances: and the idea of working up such subjects into poems worthy of a cultivated audience, had already been put in act in the romantic epics of Italy. Our great poet would not, probably, have written exactly as he did write, if Ariosto had not written before him; nor is it unlikely that he was guided also to some extent by the more recent example of Tasso. But his design was, in several striking features, nobler and more arduous than that of either. His deep seriousness is thoroughly unlike the mocking tone of the Orlando Furioso; he rose still higher than the Jerusalem Delivered in his earnest moral enthusiasm; and he aimed at something much beyond either of his masters, but unfortunately at something which marred the poetic effect of his work, when he framed it so that it should be really a series of ethical allegories.

3. The leading story, doubtless, is based, not on allegory, but on traditional history. Its hero is the chivalrous Arthur of the British legends. But even he was to be wrapt up in a cloud of symbols: Gloriana, the Queen of Faerie, who gave name to the poem, and who was to be the object of the prince's reverent love, was herself an emblem of virtuous renown; while, to confuse us yet more, she was also respectfully designed to represent in some way or other the poet's sovereign, Elizabeth. If this part of the plan was to be elaborated much in the latter half of the poem, we may regret the less that we have missed it.

In the parts which we have, Arthur emerges only at rare intervals, to take a decisive but passing share in some of the events in which the secondary personages are involved. It is in the narration of those events that the poem is chiefly occupied; and in them allegory reigns supreme. All the incidents are significant of moral truths; of the moral dangers which beset the path of man, of the virtues which it is the duty of man to cherish. The personages, too, are allegories, quite as strictly as those of Bunyan's pilgrim story. Indeed the anxiety with which the double meaning is kept up, is the circumstance that chiefly removes the poem from ordinary sympathies. Yet, regarded merely as stories, the adventures possess an interest, which is almost everywhere lively and sometimes becomes intense. We often forget the hidden meaning, in the delight with which we contemplate the pictures by which it is veiled. Solitary forests spread out their glades around us; enchanted palaces and fairy gardens gleam suddenly on the eye; the pomp of tournaments glitters on vast plains; touching and sublime sentiments, couched in language marvellously sweet, are now pre-

sented as the attributes of the human personages of the tale, and now wrapt up in the disguise of gorgeous pageants.

4. The adventures of the characters, connected by no tie except the occasional interposition of Arthur, form really six independent Poetic Tales. These are related in our six extant Books, each containing twelve Cantos.

The First Book, by far the finest of all, both in idea and in execution, relates the Legend of the Red-Cross Knight, who is the type of Holiness. He is the appointed champion of the persecuted Lady Una, the representative of Truth, the daughter of a king whose realm, described in shadowy phrases, receives in one passage the name of Eden. In her service he penetrates into the labyrinth of Error, and slays the monster that inhabited it. But, under the temptations of the enchanter Archimago, who is the emblem of Hypocrisy, he is enticed away by the beautiful witch Duessa, or Falsehood, on whom the wizard has bestowed the figure of her pure rival. This separation plunges the betrayed Knight into severe suffering; and it exposes the unprotected lady to many dangers, in the description of which occurs some of the most exquisite poetry of the work. At length, in the House of Holiness, the Knight is taught Repentance. Purified and strengthened, he vanquishes the Dragon which was Una's enemy, and is betrothed to her in her father's kingdom.

In the Second Book we have the Legend of Sir Guyon, illustrating the virtue of Temperance, that is, of resistance to all allurements sensual and worldly. This part of the poem abounds, beyond all the rest, in exquisite painting of picturesque landscapes; in some of which, however, imitation of Tasso is obvious. The Legend of Britomart, or of Chastity, is the theme of the Third Book, in which, besides the heroine, are introduced Belphebe and Amoret, two of the most beautiful of those female characters whom the poet takes such pleasure in delineating. Next comes the Legend of Friendship, personified in the knights Cambel and Triamond. In it is the tale of Florimel, a version of an old tale of the romances, embellished with an array of fine imagery, which is dwelt on with admiring delight in one of the noblest odes of Collins. Yet this Fourth Book, and the two which follow, are generally allowed to be on the whole inferior to the first three. The falling off is most perceptible when we pass to the Fifth Book, containing the Legend of Sir Artegal, who is the emblem of Justice. This story indeed is told, not only with a strength of moral sentiment unsurpassed elsewhere by the poet, but also with some of his most striking exhibitions of personification: the interest, however, is weakened by the constant

anxiety to bring out that subordinate signification, in which the narrative was intended to celebrate the government of Spenser's patron Lord Grey in Ireland. The Sixth Book, the Legend of Sir Calidore, or of Courtesy, is apt to dissatisfy us through its want of unity; although some of the scenes and figures are inspired with the poet's warmest glow of fancy.\*

\* EDMUND SPENSER.

*From "The Faerie Queene."*

I. UNA DESERTED BY THE RED-CROSS KNIGHT.

Yet she, most faithful Lady, all this while  
 Forsaken,—woeful, solitary maid,  
 Far from all people's press, as in exile,  
 In wilderness and wasteful deserts strayed,  
 To seek her Knight, who,—subtiley betrayed  
 Through that late vision which the Enchanter wrought,  
 Had her abandoned:—She, of nought afraid,  
 Through woods and wasteness wide him daily sought:  
 Yet wish'd tidings none of him unto her brought.

One day, nigh weary of the irksome way,  
 From her unhasty beast she did alight;  
 And on the grass her dainty limbs did lay,  
 In secret shadow, far from all men's sight:  
 From her fair head her fillet she undight,  
 And laid her stole aside:—her Angel's face,  
 As the great eye of heaven shined bright,  
 And made a sunshine in the shady place:  
 Did never mortal eye behold such heavenly grace!

It fortun'd, out of the thickest wood,  
 A ramping lion rush'd suddenly,  
 Hunting full greedy after savage blood:—  
 Soon as the Royal Virgin he did spy,  
 With gaping mouth at her ran greedily,  
 To have at once devoured her tender corse:  
 But, to the prey whenas he drew more nigh,  
 His bloody rage assuag'd with remorse,  
 And, with the sight amazed, forgot his furious force.

Instead thereof, he kissed her weary feet,  
 And lick'd her lily hands, with fawning tongue,  
 As he her wrong'd innocence did weet:  
 Oh, how can Beauty master the most strong,  
 And simple Truth subdue Avenging Wrong!  
 Whose yielded pride and proud submission,  
 Still dreading death when she had mark'd long,  
 Her heart gan melt in great compassion,  
 And drizzling tears did shed for pure affection.

## THE MINOR POETS OF THE TIME.

5. Our file of Non-Dramatic poets from this age, beginning with the name of Spenser, will end with that of Milton. Between these two men, there were none whose genius can fairly be held equal to that of the minor play-writers. The drama would, though Shakspeare's works were withdrawn, be the kind of poetry, for the sake of which the time of Elizabeth and her next successors is most worthy of admiration.

Yet the non-dramatic poetry of those two or three generations not only was abundant, but contains many specimens possessing very great excellence. Indeed the merit of the drama is a guarantee for merit here. For the same poets generally laboured in both fields; and the truth is, that the prevailing fashion, which drew away the most imaginative men to write for the stage, produced not a few indifferent dramas, whose authors might have been eminent in other walks if they had confined themselves to them.

In endeavouring to form a general notion of the large mass of literary works here lying before us, we find ourselves to be embarrassed by the remarkable variety of forms which poetry took, and in many of which also the same poet exerted himself by turns. Thus Shakspeare and Jonson, best known as dramatists, were successful writers of lyrical and other poems; Drayton and Daniel, remembered now, if at all, for their non-dramatic poems, possessed in

## II. ANGELS WATCHING OVER MANKIND.

And is there care in heaven, and is there love  
 In heavenly spirits to these creatures base,  
 That may compassion of their evils move?  
 There is:—else much more wretched were the case  
 Of men than beasts: But, oh! the exceeding grace  
 Of Highest God, that loves his creatures so,  
 And all his works with mercy doth embrace;  
 That bless'd angels he sends to and fro,  
 To serve to wicked man, to serve his wicked foe!

How oft do they their silver bowërs leave,  
 To come to succour us that succour want!  
 How oft do they with golden pinions cleave  
 The fitting skies, like flying pursuivant,  
 Against foul fiends to aid us militant!  
 They for us fight: they watch and duly ward,  
 And their bright squadrons round about us plant;  
 And all for love, and nothing for reward:  
 Oh, why should heavenly God to men have such regard



their own day no small note as play-writers. Drayton, again, if we look beyond his plays, wrote poems belonging to almost every one of the kinds which will immediately be enumerated.

We require to classify, but cannot easily find a principle. One which is somewhat famous must be discarded at once, but, being instructive, should be described. It is that according to which Samuel Johnson classed together, under the title of *Metaphysical*, a large number of the poets of James's reign and the following generation, beginning the list with Donne, and closing it with Cowley. "These were such as laboured after conceits, or novel turns of thought, usually false, and resting upon some equivocation of language or exceedingly remote analogy." This is just a description of that corrupt taste towards which our English poets leant throughout the first half of the seventeenth century, and which had had its beginning even earlier; a taste, likewise, which infected prose literature deeply, and which we have seen hurting especially the eloquence of the pulpit. It would be impossible to name any poet of the time, in whose writings symptoms of it could not be traced. The only distinction we could draw is, between those who gave way to it only occasionally, (like Shakspeare, whose besetting sin it was,) and those who indulged in it purposely and incessantly, holding its manifestations indeed to be their finest strokes of art. The disease had doubtless travelled from Italy: but it was naturalized as early as Lyly, assuming only some peculiarities which suited it for diffusion in its new climate.

6. All the poetical works of that age, whose authors demand our acquaintance, may be distributed into Seven Classes, which, though the distinctions between them are not quite exact, may easily be kept apart from each other. They are these: the *Metrical Translations*; those *Narrative Poems* whose themes may be described as *Historical*; the *Descriptive Poems*; the *Pastorals*; the *Satires*; the *Didactic Poems*; and the *Lyrics*.

The earliest of the *Translations*, worthless as poems, exerted perhaps greater influence than the more meritorious works which followed. They were the means of kindling, more widely than it would otherwise have spread, that mixed spirit of classicism and chivalry which breathes through so much of the Elizabethan poetry. This doubtful praise was earned, in the early part of the queen's reign, by several attempts which were alluded to when we began to study the literature of this great period. *Translations* from the Italian, both in prose and verse, showed themselves as early, and furnished stories to Shakspeare; and others from the French were yet more common.

We do not discover in those efforts any thing deserving to be called poetry, till we reach the translations of Marlowe from Ovid, Lucan, and the pseudo-Musæus. An undertaking still bolder was that of the dramatist Chapman, who, beginning in 1596, published at length an entire translation of the *Iliad* into English Alexandrines. This work, spirited and poetical, but rough and incorrect, was not ill described by Pope when he said, that it was such an *Iliad* as Homer might have written before he came to years of discretion. The *Odyssey* followed, from the same pen. Among the translations from the great poets of Italy, Harrington's *Orlando Furioso* deserves notice only as having just followed the *Faerie Queene*. Fairfax's *Tasso*, published in 1600, has been called by a modern poet one of the glories of Elizabeth's reign. It is equally poetical, accurate, and good in style: and no modern work can contest with it the honour of being still our best version of the *Jerusalem Delivered*. Sandys' *Metamorphoses* of Ovid, and his *Metrical Translations* from Scripture, are poetically pleasing: and they have a merit in diction and versification which has been acknowledged thankfully by later poets.

7. Poems of that second kind, which our list has called *Historical Narratives*, were the most ambitious of the original compositions. But, though all that are worth remembering came after Spenser, none of them attempted to re-create his world of allegoric and chivalrous wonders. Nor was this by any means the most successful walk of the art.

The favourite topics, besides a few religious ones, were *Classical stories*, which were treated frequently, or passages from *English history*, which were still more common, and were often dealt with in avowed imitation or continuation of the old *Mirror of Magistrates*. In the former class, the most striking are two youthful poems of Shakspeare, the *Lucrece*, and the *Venus and Adonis*; pieces morally equivocal in tone, but characteristically beautiful in sentiment and imagery. Of the extracts from the national history, there are not a few which were very celebrated. Daniel's series of poems from the Wars of the Roses, is soft and pleasing in details, but verbose and languid. Drayton's "*Barons' Wars*," and "*England's Heroical Epistles*," are much more interesting, and in many passages both touching and imaginative; but in neither of them is there shown a just conception of the poet's prerogative of idealizing the actual. The good taste of our own time has rescued from forgetfulness two interesting poems of this class: Chamberlayne's "*Pharonnida*;" and the "*Thealma and Clearchus*," which Walton published as the work of an unknown

poet named Chalkhill. Several others must be left quite unnoticed : and this series may be closed with the vigorous fragment of "Gondibert," by the dramatist Sir William Davenant.

But different from all these were the religious poems composed by the two brothers Fletcher, cousins of the dramatic writer. "The Purple Island" of the younger brother, Phineas, is the nearest thing we have to an imitation of Spenser ; but it is hardly worthy of its fame. It is an undisguised and wearisome allegory, symbolizing all parts and functions both of man's body and of his mind ; and it is redeemed only by the poetical spirit of some of the passages.

b. ab. 1580. } Giles Fletcher, however, has given us one of the most  
d. 1623. } beautiful religious poems in any language, animated in narrative, lively in fancy, and touching in feeling. Over-abundant it is, doubtless, in allegory ; but the interest is wonderfully well sustained in spite of this. It is a narrative, which reminds us of Milton, and with which Milton was familiar, of the redemption of man ; and its four parts are joined together under the common title of "Christ's Victory and Triumphs."\*

\* GILES FLETCHER.

*From "Christ's Victory in Heaven."*

But Justice had no sooner Mercy seen  
Smoothing the wrinkles of her Father's brow,  
But up she starts, and throws herself between :—  
As when a vapour from a moory slough,  
Meeting with fresh Eoüs, that but now  
Open'd the world which all in darkness lay,  
Doth heav'n's bright face of his rays disarray,  
And sads the smiling orient of the springing day.

She was a virgin of austere regard ;  
Not, as the world esteems her, deaf and blind ;  
But as the eagle, that hath oft compared  
Her eye with heav'n's, so and more brightly shined  
Her lamping sight : for she the same could wind  
Into the solid heart ; and with her ears  
The silence of the thought loud-speaking hears ;  
And in one hand a pair of even scales she wears.

No riot of affection revel kept  
Within her breast ; but a still apathy  
Possess'd all her soul, which softly slept,  
Securely, without tempest : no sad cry  
Awakes her pity : but wrong'd poverty,  
Sending his eyes to heav'n swimming in tears,  
With hideous clamours ever struck her ears,  
Whetting the blazing sword that in her hand she bears.

8. Not easily distinguishable from our last kind of poems, in some points, are the Pastorals, a kind of composition which probably gave birth, early in the seventeenth century, to a larger array of attractive passages of verse than any other. From Spenser onwards, there was hardly any poet but contributed to the stock, if it were nothing more than a ballad or a rural dialogue. The example of the Italians, too, prompted the dramatists to bring on the stage the imaginatively adorned picture of rustic life : and among the finest works of the time were Fletcher's "Faithful Shepherdess," and "The Sad Shepherd" of Jonson.

In the more ambitious attempts at the Eclogue, one of the most curious features is the air of nationality and local truth which, almost always, the poets put on. Four collections of Eclogues were the chief. Warner's "Albion's England" has been called, not inaptly, an enormous ballad on the legendary history of our country. Its most obvious fault is the awkwardness with which it oscillates between the rude simplicity of the ballad, and the regularity of the sustained narrative poem : but it contains some very pleasing passages in a quiet strain. Drayton's "Eclogues" are hardly worthy of him ; but we might fairly refer to the same class his delightful fairy ballad, called "Nymphidia." Wither, best known in his own time as a controversial writer on the side of the Puritans, wrote, principally in early life, poems which are among the most pleasing in our language, delicately fanciful, and always pure both in taste and in morals. Some of the best of these are the pastoral dialogues called "The Shepherd's Hunting," which have more of thoughtful reality than most works of the kind. Browne's poems are delightfully rich in the description of landscapes, and in all their accessory ornaments, but deficient in dramatic force, and tediously long. His connected poem, called "Britannia's Pastorals," is especially abundant in fine pictures, and especially verbose : his "Shepherd's Pipe" attempts the ballad-style with small success.

b. 1563. } 9. The "Poly-Olbion," the largest and most celebrated  
d. 1631. } work of Drayton, is in its outline Descriptive. But it may serve us also as a point of connexion between the Pastoral Poem and the Didactic, while it has very close relations to the Historical. It is designed, without disguise, to furnish a topographical description of England ; a purpose so dangerously prosaic, as to deserve in an eminent degree the ban, which condemns, as going out of the sphere of poetry, all poems whose main design is instruction. Huge in length, as well as injudicious in purpose, Drayton's work has seldom perhaps been read from beginning to end ; but no one susceptible of poetic beauty can look into any part of it, with-

out being fascinated and longing to read more. There is not in existence any instance so signal, of fine fancy and feeling, and great command of pure and strong language, thrown almost utterly away. Beautiful natural objects, striking national legends, recent facts, and ingenious allegorical and mythological inventions, are all lavished on this thankless design.\*

An older didactic poet, Fulke Greville lord Brooke, who desired to have it written on his grave, that he was the friend of Sir Philip Sidney, exhibits, in his "Treatise of Human Learning," less of poetical power, than of solemn ethical and philosophical thought, couched in diction strikingly pointed and energetic, though often very obscure. There is less of thinking, with more of fancy, in the poems of Sir John Davies: the one, on the Immortality of the

\* MICHAEL DRAYTON.

*From the "Poly-Olbion."*

*Lament over the decay of Charnwood Forest in Leicestershire.*

Oh Charnwood, be thou call'd the choicest of thy kind!  
The like in any place what flood hath happ'd to find?  
No tract in all this isle, the proudest let her be,  
Can show a sylvan nymph for beauty like to thee.  
The satyrs and the fauns, by Dian set to keep  
Rough hills and forest-holts, were sadly seen to weep,  
When thy high-palm'd harts, the sport of bows and hounds,  
By gripple borderers' hands were banish'd thy grounds.  
The Dryads that were wont about thy lawns to rove,  
To trip from wood to wood, and scud from grove to grove,  
On Sharpley that were seen, and Chadman's aged rocks,  
Against the rising sun to braid their silver locks,  
And with the harmless elves, on heathy Bardon's height,  
By Cynthia's colder beams to play them night by night,  
Exil'd their sweet abode, to poor bare commons fled:  
They, with the oaks that liv'd, now with the oaks are dead!

Who will describe to life a forest, let him take  
Thy surface to himself; nor shall he need to make  
Another form at all; where oft in thee is found  
Fine sharp but easy hills, which reverently are crown'd  
With ag'd antique rocks, to which the goats and sheep  
(To him that stands remote) do softly seem to creep,  
To gnaw the little shrubs on their steep sides that grow:  
Upon whose other part, on some descending brow,  
Huge stones are hanging out, as though they down would drop;  
Where undergrowing oaks on their old shoulders prop  
The others' hoary heads, which still seem to decline.  
And in a dingle near, (ev'n as a place divine  
For contemplation fit,) an ivy-ceill'd bower,  
As nature had therein ordain'd some sylvan power.



Soul; the other, solemn in spite of its title, "Orchestra, or a Poem on Dancing." From the generation after this, we have several writers of religious poems, who may most conveniently be referred to the same class. Two in particular, Herbert and Quarles, might likewise be taken as specimens of the oddest peculiarities characterizing Johnson's "metaphysical poets." One was "Holy George Herbert," by whose writings, both in prose and verse, not less than by the record of his life, the belief and offices of the Church of England are presented in their most amiable aspect. Herbert has been compared to Keble: Quarles has been truly said to be not unlike Young. The "Emblems," the best known of Quarles' works, are alternately striking and ridiculous.

The Didactic poems run, naturally, both into the Satirical and into the Lyrical.

The Satire, finding its way into every place where thought and action are not quite fettered, has, in rude forms, encountered us among the literary attempts of the middle ages. Near the close of the sixteenth century, a series of such poems, wearing a more classical air than any that had preceded, was begun by the juvenile "Satires" of Bishop Hall, which are full of strength and observation, not without poetry, but obscure in language. The Satires of Marston the dramatist, severe beyond the bounds of decency, followed soon: and then came those of Donne, as obscure as Hall's, and hardly in any respect better than they, but more widely known in recent times through Pope's modernized alterations of them.

10. Our last class of poems, the Lyrical, may be understood as comprehending the Ode, the Sonnet, the Song, and other small compositions in which the poet's chief aim is the expression of his own moods of feeling. The kind of works thus described was, as it is in most societies that are at all cultivated, more abundant than any other. Really one of the most difficult kinds of poetry, it seems to be the easiest of all. Among the dramatists who have been named, there was hardly any who did not write something of this sort. Some of Shakspeare's songs, and not a few of his sonnets, are very fine.\*

\* WILLIAM SHAKSPEARE.

*A Sonnet.*

That time of year thou may'st in me behold,  
 When yellow leaves, or few, or none, do hang  
 Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,  
 Bare ruin'd choirs, where late the sweet birds sang.  
 In me thou seest the twilight of such day  
 As after sunset fadeth in the west,  
 Which by and by black night doth take away,  
 Death's second self, that seals up all in rest.

Many of the lyrics of Jonson and Fletcher are exquisite. Not a few of our other poets owe their fame chiefly to their lyrics : and some which came to us from the age in question are among the most beautiful flowers in the poetic chaplet of our country.\*

The Pure Lyric, of which the Ode may be taken as an example, was not common in the earlier part of the period. Much more frequent were those mixed kinds, with which Narrative is incorporated, (as in many specimens of the Ballad,) or Reflection, as in the Sonnet and in many irregular Lyrico-didactic poems. Thus a good many pieces of Warner and Drayton might be considered as Lyrical Ballads : and the Sonnet was common from the time of Sidney and Spenser. Of the many Sonnet-writers, the best was the Scotsman Drummond of Hawthornden ; unless the palm may be contested by Daniel, some of whose sonnets are singularly beautiful. The eccentric Earl of Stirling, a better sonneteer than most others, was decidedly inferior to these two.

11. To the Lyrical class, in one or another of its mixed forms,

In me thou seest the glowing of such fire  
That on the ashes of his youth doth lie,  
As the deathbed whereon it must expire,  
Consum'd with that which it was nourish'd by.  
This thou perceiv'st, which makes thy love more strong ;  
To love that well which thou must leave ere long.

\* BEN JONSON.

*Hymn to Diana, from his Play of " Cynthia's Revels."*

Queen and Huntress, chaste and fair,  
Now the sun is laid to sleep,  
Seated in thy silver car,  
State in wonted manner keep :  
Hesperus entreats thy light,  
Goddess excellently bright !  
  
Earth, let not thy curious shade  
Dare itself to interpose :  
Cynthia's shining orb was made  
Heav'n to clear, when day did close :  
Bless us then with wish'd sight,  
Goddess excellently bright !  
  
Lay thy bow of pearl apart,  
And thy crystal shining quiver ;  
Give unto the flying hart  
Space to breathe, how short soever ;  
Thou that mak'st a day of night,  
Goddess excellently bright !

belong many of the poems of Donne, which, with affectations and conceits as bad as any thing to be found in his century, are in many passages wonderfully fine, both for picturesque fancy and for suggestive pointedness of diction.\* The poems of Herrick, the best of which are short snatches of verse, are always lyrical in substance and usually so in form. In graceful fancy and delicate expression, many of them are unsurpassed and inimitable: in subject and in moral tone they vary astonishingly, from amorous addresses, often indecently expressed, to the utmost warmth of devout aspiration.†

\* JOHN DONNE.

*The Message of a Lover to his False Mistress.*

Send home my long-stray'd eyes to me,  
Which, (oh, too long!) have dwelt on thee,  
But, if they there have learned such ill,  
Such forc'd fashions  
And false passions,  
That they be,  
Made by thee,  
Fit for no good sight, keep them still!

Send home my harmless heart again,  
Which no unworthy thought could stain:  
But, if it be taught by thine  
To make jestings  
Of protestings,  
And break both  
Word and oath,  
Keep it still: 'tis none of mine!

Yet, send me back my heart and eyes,  
That I may know and see thy lies;  
And may laugh and joy when thou  
Art in anguish,  
And dost languish  
For some one  
That will none,  
Or prove as false as thou dost now!

† ROBERT HERRICK.

*Address to the Meadows in Winter.*

Ye have been fresh and green,  
Ye have been fill'd with flowers:  
And ye the walks have been,  
Where maids have spent their hours.  
Ye have beheld where they  
With wicker arks did come,  
To kiss and bear away  
The richer cowslips home.

Cowley, one of the latest, and without any exception the most celebrated, among the lyrists who have been classed in the metaphysical school, has been very variously estimated by different critics. That he was a man of extraordinary poetic susceptibility and fancy, cannot be doubted; and his poems abound in short passages exceedingly beautiful: but his very activity of thought made him more prone than almost any other poet of his time, to strained analogies and unreal refinements. Among minor lyrical poets, to whom we owe poems still worthy to be read, it is enough to name such as Carew, Ayton, and Habington; along with whom might perhaps be placed in our list Suckling, Lovelace, and several others.

Two names have been reserved to the close of the series, because those who bore them were, especially in point of language, a sort of link between the time before the Restoration and that which followed. Denham's "Cooper's Hill," a poem of reflective description, was so good a piece of heroic verse that it did not leave very much for Dryden to effect in the improvement of that measure. The diversified poems of Waller, especially those which hovered between the didactic sphere and the lyric, were remarkable advances in ease and correctness both of diction and of versification.

#### THE POETRY OF JOHN MILTON.

12. The poetry of the imaginative period which began with Spenser, closes yet more nobly with Milton. He, standing in some respects as far apart from his stern contemporaries of the Commonwealth, as he stood from those who debased literature in the age of the Restoration, does yet belong rather to the older period than the newer.

His youth received its intellectual nourishment in the last days of the old monarchy. While the beautiful images of Greek and Roman antiquity warmed his mind with a delight which never forsook it, the recent literature of his native tongue was studied

You've heard them sweetly sing,  
 And seen them in a round,  
 Each virgin like a Spring  
 With honeysuckles crown'd.  
 But now we see none here,  
 Whose silvery feet did tread,  
 And with dishevell'd hair  
 Adorn'd this smoother mead.  
 Like unthrifths, having spent  
 Your stock, and needy grown,  
 You're left here to lament  
 Your poor estates alone.

quite as eagerly and admiringly; and a love hardly less intense was kindled towards those wild pictures of knighthood and magic, which were painted in the romances of the middle ages. No poet, hardly Virgil himself, has ever claimed more boldly the self-assumed prerogative, which genius uses in appropriating the thoughts of its predecessors; and none has ever more felicitously transformed the borrowed stores, so as to make the new image truly original. His imitations of the older English poets are innumerable: so are his borrowings from the classics: and his delight in the artless literature and the shadowy traditions of the early times, tempted him, when young, to contemplate, as the great task of his life, a chivalrous poem on the exploits and fate of King Arthur. If this design had been executed, the English tongue might have received a monument rivalling the Italian epics of the sixteenth century. Those early visions still dwelt in his mind, after his aspirations had been fixed on objects higher and more solemn. The classical allusions in all his writings are as numerous as fine; and hardly less often does he enliven and vary his descriptions of sacred things, by passages in which he clothes, with a more majestic beauty than their own, his chivalrous and romantic recollections. But, like that fervid pleasure in external nature which glowed still more brightly when the earth had become dark to the poet's eye, his classicism and his fondness for romance became but subordinate as guides to his thoughts and wishes. Poetical dreams made way for the action and reflection of one who was at once a religious man, a statesman, and a man of business. Diplomatic papers, and controversial treatises, sometimes mixed with matter of more permanent interest, diverted from its higher offices the energetic mind, in which, nevertheless, there was ever brooding the thought of a poetical work more ambitious and more vast than any of those that had been fancied in his youthful hours. At length, amidst evil men and in the gloom of evil days, the great idea was matured; and the Christian epic, chanted at first when there were few disposed to hear, became an enduring monument of genius and learning and art, never perhaps destined to gain the favour of the many, but always cherished and revered by all who love poetry inspired by high genius, and who honour, most of all, poetry which is consecrated to holiness and virtue.

13. The prodigal variety of Milton's imagination, and the delicate tenderness of feeling which was overshadowed by the solemnity of his great work, are exhibited in those poems which he wrote in early manhood, before his mind had been made stern by the turmoil of active life in a turbulent age. It is not too much to say, that



those early poems would, if he had given us nothing else, vindicate his superiority to all the poets of his period, except Shakspeare and Spenser. The most popular of them, the descriptive pieces of "L'Allegro," and "Il Penseroso," are perhaps perfect in their kind, and certainly the best in their kind that any language actually possesses. Never was voice given, more sweetly, to the echo which the loveliness of inanimate nature awakens in the poetic heart: never were the feelings of that heart invested with a finer medium of communication through images drawn from things without. In the "Comus," Milton gave vent to that hearty admiration, with which he regarded the dramatists of the preceding generation. He here emulates the most poetical form of composition which they had adopted; the Masque, a pageant designed for court and other festivals, usually interspersed with lyrical pieces, and, if not mythological or allegorical, at least open everywhere to free imaginative adornment. For exhibition either of intense passion, or of strongly developed character, such a composition gives no adequate scope. There is not in our tongue any poem of similar length, from which could be culled a larger collection of passages that are exquisite for imagination, for sentiment, or for the musical flow of the rhythm, in which indeed the majestic swell of the poet's later blank verse begins to be heard. The "Arcades" may be described as a weaker effort of the same sort. The elegy called "Lycidas" is one of the fullest examples of the author's poetical learning, and of the skill with which he used his materials. It is in form Italian, and brimful of classical allusion; unattractive to most minds, but delightful to those which are trained highly enough to relish the most refined idealism of thought, and the most delicate skill of construction. The Ode on the Nativity has been pronounced to be, perhaps, the finest in the English language.

Much less poetical than these youthful works, are those with which the great poet closed his course. The "Paradise Regained" abounds with passages which in themselves are in one way or another beautiful: but the plan is poorly conceived; and the didactic tendency, which the defective design created, prevails to wearisomeness as the work proceeds.\* Nor is the "Samson Agonistes"

\* JOHN MILTON.

*From "Paradise Regained."*

Look once more, ere we leave this specular mount.  
Westward, much nearer by south-west, behold  
Where on the Ægean sea a city stands  
Built nobly; pure the air and light the soil;  
Athens, the eye of Greece, mother of arts

by any means so successful an imitation of the Greek drama, as the "Comus" had been of Jonson and Fletcher. It wears a striking air of solemnity, rising indeed into a higher sphere than that of its classical models; but it is neither impassioned, nor strong in character, nor poetical in its lyrical parts. It is an interesting proof of that long-cherished fondness for the dramatic form of composition, which shows itself in the structure even of his epics, and which had tempted him to begin the "Paradise Lost" in the form of a play.

14. That the theme of *Paradise Lost* is the noblest which any poet ever chose, and that yet its very grandeur may make it the less pleasing to many readers, are points that will be admitted by all. If we say that the theme is managed with a skill almost unequalled, the plan laid down and executed with extraordinary exactness of art, we make assertions which are due to the poet, but on the correctness of which few of his readers are qualified to judge. Like other great works, and in a higher degree than most, the poem is

And eloquence, native to famous wits  
 Or hospitable in her sweet recess,  
 City or suburban, studious walks and shades.  
 See there the olive grove of Academe,  
 Plato's retirement, where the Attic bird  
 Trills her thick-warbled notes the summer long:  
 There, flowery hill, Hymettus, with the sound  
 Of bees' industrious murmur, oft invites  
 To studious musing: there Ilyssus rolls  
 His whispering stream. Within the walls then view  
 The schools of ancient sages; his who bred  
 Great Alexander to subdue the world;  
 Lyceum there, and painted Stoa next:  
 There shalt thou hear and learn the secret power  
 Of harmony, in tones and numbers hit  
 By voice or hand, and various-measured verse,  
 Æolian charms, and Dorian lyric odes;  
 And his who gave them breath, but higher sung,  
 Blind Melesigenes, thence Homer called,  
 Whose poem Phœbus challeng'd for his own.  
 Thence, what the lofty grave tragedians taught  
 In chorus or iambic, teachers best  
 Of moral prudence with delight received  
 In brief sententious precepts, while they treat  
 Of fate, and chance, and change in human life;  
 High actions and high passions best describing:  
 Thence to the famous orators repair,  
 Those ancients, whose resistless eloquence  
 Wielded at will that fierce democratic,  
 Shook the arsenal, and fulmin'd over Greece,  
 To Macedon and Artaxerxes' throne.

oftenest studied and estimated by piecemeal only. Though it be so taken, and though its unbroken and weighty solemnity should at length have caused weariness, it cannot but have left a vivid impression on all minds not quite unsusceptible of fine influences. The stately march of its diction; the organ-peal with which its versification rolls on; the continual overflowing, especially in the earlier books, of beautiful illustrations from nature or art; the clearly and brightly coloured pictures of human happiness and innocence; the melancholy grandeur with which angelic natures are clothed in their fall: these are features, some or all of which must be delightful to most of us, and which give to the mind images and feelings not easily or soon effaced. If the poet has sometimes aimed at describing scenes, over which should have been cast the veil of reverential silence, we shall remember that this occurs but rarely. If other scenes and figures of a supernatural kind are invested with a costume which may seem to us unduly corporeal even for the poetic inventor, we should pause to recollect that the task thus attempted is one in which perfect success is unattainable; and we shall ourselves, unless our fancy is cold indeed, be awed and dazzled, whether we will or not, by many of those very pictures.

“The most striking characteristic of the poetry of Milton, is the extreme remoteness of the associations by means of which it acts on the reader. Its effect is produced, not so much by what it expresses, as by what it suggests; not so much by the ideas which it directly conveys, as by other ideas which are connected with them. He electrifies the mind through conductors. The most unimaginative man must understand the *Iliad*; Homer gives him no choice; but takes the whole on himself, and sets his images in so clear a light that it is impossible to be blind to them. Milton does not paint a finished picture, or play for a mere passive listener. He sketches, and leaves others to fill up the outline: he strikes the key-note, and expects his hearer to make out the melody.”\*

\* Macaulay: *Essays from the Edinburgh Review*.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## THE AGE OF THE RESTORATION AND THE REVOLUTION.

A. D. 1660—A. D. 1702.

Charles II.,.....1660-1685.

James II.,.....1685-1687.

William III.,.....1688-1702.

1. Social and Literary Character of the Period.—PROSE. 2. Theology—Leighton—Sermons of South, Tillotson, and Barrow—Nonconformist Divines—Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*—The Philosophy of Locke—Bentley and Classical Learning.—3. Antiquaries and Historians—Lord Clarendon's History—Bishop Burnet's Histories.—4. Miscellaneous Prose—Walton—Evelyn—L'Estrange—Butler and Marvell—John Dryden's Prose Writings—His Style—His Critical Opinions—Temple's Essays.—POETRY. 5. Dramas—Their Character—French Influences—Dryden's Plays—Tragedies of Lee, Otway, and Southerne—The Prose Comedies—Their Moral Foulness.—6. Poetry Not Dramatic—Its Didactic and Satiric Character—Inferences.—7. Minor Poets—Roscommon—Marvell—Butler's *Hudibras*—Prior.—8. John Dryden's Life and Works.—9. Dryden's Poetical Character.

1. THE last forty years of the seventeenth century will not occupy us long. Their aspect is, on the whole, far from being pleasant; and some features, marking many of their literary works, are positively revolting.

In the reign of Charles the Second, England, whether we have regard to the political, the moral, or the literary state of the nation, resembled a fine antique garden, neglected and falling into decay. A few patriarchal trees still rose green and stately; a few chance-sown flowers began to blossom in the shade: but lawn and parterre and alley were matted with noisome weeds; and the stagnant waters breathed out pestilential damps. When, after the Revolution, the attempt was made to re-introduce order and productiveness, many of the wild plants were allowed still to cumber the ground; and there were compartments which, worn out by the rank vegetation they had borne, became for a time altogether barren. In a word, the Restoration brought in evils of all kinds, many of which lingered through the age that succeeded, and others were not eradicated for several generations.

Of all the social mischiefs of the time, none infected literature so deeply as that depravation of morals, into which the court and the

aristocracy plunged, and into which so many of the people followed them. The lighter kinds of composition mirrored faithfully the surrounding blackness. The drama sank to a frightful grossness: the tone of thinking was lowered also in other walks of poetry. The coarseness of speech survived the close of the century: the cool, selfish, calculating spirit, which had been the more tolerable form of the degradation, survived, though in a mitigated degree, very much longer. This bad morality was in part attributable to a second characteristic of the time, which produced likewise other consequences. The reinstated courtiers imported a mania for foreign models, especially French. The favourite literary works, instead of continuing to obey native and natural impulses, were anxiously moulded on the tastes of Paris. This prevalence of exotic predilections endured for more than a century.

Amidst all these and other weaknesses and blots, there was not wanting either strength or brightness. The literary career of Dryden covers the whole of our period, and marks a change which contained improvement in several features. Locke was the leader of philosophical speculation: and mathematical and physical science, little dependent on the political or moral state of the times, had its active band of distinguished votaries headed by Newton;

“ ————— a mind for ever

Voyaging through strange seas of thought, alone !”

That philosophy and science did not even then neglect goodness, or despise religion, is proved by the names which we have last read; and, in many other quarters, there were uttered, though to inattentive ears, stern protests against evil, which have echoed from age to age till they reached ourselves. Those voices issued from not a few of the high places of the church; and others were lifted up, sadly but firmly, in the midst of persecution. The Act of Uniformity, by silencing the puritan clergy, actually gave to the ablest of them a greater power at the time, and a power which, but for this, would not so probably have bequeathed to us any record. The Nonconformists wrote and printed, when they were forbidden to speak. A younger generation was growing up among them: and some of the elder race still survived; such as the fiery Baxter, the calm Owen, and the prudent Calamy. Greatest of all, and only now reaching the climax of his strength, Milton sat in the narrow chamber of his neglected old age: bating no jot of hope, yielding no point of honesty, abjuring no word or syllable of faith; but consoling himself for the disappointments which had darkened a weary life, by consecrating its waning years, with redoubled ardour of devotion, to religion, to truth, and to the service of a remote posterity.



## PROSE LITERATURE.

2. Among those good and able Churchmen, who passed from the troubles of the Commonwealth and Protectorate to the seeming victory but real danger of the Restoration, were Jeremy Taylor, and several other men of eminence. Of those who, so situated, have not yet been named, the earliest we encounter is Leighton, Archbishop of Glasgow; a man whose apostolic gentleness of conduct endeared him deeply to his contemporaries, and whose devoutly meditative eloquence made him, in our own day, the bosom-oracle of Coleridge.

Much more famous, and possessed of much greater natural power, were three Theologians whose writings, all able and learned, yet want the charm of sentiment which Leighton's warmth of heart diffuses over all his works. These were South, Tillotson, and Barrow.

*b.* 1633. } South was a man of remarkable oratorical endowments :  
*d.* 1716. } but probably no one would now claim for him a high rank as a Christian preacher. Dogmatical, sarcastic, and intolerant; shrewd in practical observation, unhesitatingly abundant in familiar wit, and possessing a wonderful stock of vigorous and idiomatic phrases: he is often impressively strong in his denunciation of prevailing vices, stronger still when he ridicules clerical brethren, (as in his parody of Taylor's peculiarities,) and strongest of all in fierce polemical attacks on papists, and nonconformists, and all dissenters from the Church of England. Tillotson's writings are pervaded by a much higher and better spirit. They are not only kindly and forbearing towards opponents, but warmly earnest in their inculcation of religious belief and duty. But, in point of eloquence, he never rises above what has justly been called a noble simplicity: his fancy prompts to him no striking illustrations; and his style always tends to being both clumsy and feeble. His fame as a preacher must have been owing, in a great degree, to the well-founded reliance which was placed on his sound judgment and excellent character, and to the ability with which he combated the papal doctrines on the one hand and those of the puritans on the other. Barrow's sermons cannot but strike every one as being the works of a great thinker: they are, in truth, less properly orations, than trains of argumentative thought. His reasoning is prosecuted with an admirable union of comprehensiveness, sagacity, and clearness: and it is expressed in a style which, at once strong and regular, combines many of the virtues of the older writers with not a few of those that were appearing in the new.

In this age, however, we have lost, almost wholly, that force of un-

disciplined eloquence, which had been so commanding in the first half of the century. None of the writers that have been named come nearly up to the point : and there is still less of the old strength of impressiveness in those divines who, like Stillingfleet, Pearson, Burnet, Bull, and the elder Sherlock, hold a more prominent place in the history of the church than in that of letters.

Among the contributors to theological literature were several of the leading men of science. Barrow was one of the greatest mathematicians of our country : Bishop Wilkins was one of the founders of the Royal Society. Such also were three distinguished laymen : the amiable and excellent Boyle ; Ray, a Nonconformist, in whose writings are to be found the principles of the Natural System of Botany ; and the philosopher whose name would alone have made the age immortal, the illustrious Sir Isaac Newton.

The Nonconformist clergy were active writers, casting bread on the waters, to be found after many days. But, though Baxter lived to see the Revolution, he has already been named among the men of that previous generation, to which in spirit he belonged : nor were there in the younger race any who, in a literary view, are entitled to be ranked as his equals. Yet the excellent John  
*b.* 1630. }  
*d.* 1705. } Howe, whose "Living Temple" is still one of our religious classics, was not far from being worthy of a place by his side. At once through his enlightened kindliness, and his contemplative piety, he merited to be described by Baxter as heavenly-minded : and, though his turn of style has little regularity or compactness, and his diction no fine felicities of genius, there are in his works not a few passages that rise, nearer than anything of his time, towards the old force of eloquent persuasiveness. Owen, esteemed highly as a theologian, alike sound, and able, and learned, is a very indifferent writer : to the praise of eloquence he has no claim whatever ; nor is he very clear in thinking, or very precise in style. The pious Flavel, and other authors of the class, possess still less literary importance. But the great though untrained  
*b.* 1628. }  
*d.* 1688. } genius of Bunyan may most conveniently be commemorated here ; unless indeed we were, in virtue of the form of his best work, to set him down in another department, as a writer of romances. The fervently religious temper of "The Pilgrim's Progress" needs no commendation ; and as little do the richness of characteristic representation, the ingenuity of analogy, and the semi-scriptural force and quaintness of style, which have placed the name of the self-trained tinker of Bedford on the file of our permanent literature.

*b.* 1632. }  
*d.* 1704. } Last among the religious writers, John Locke might be named, in virtue of some of his works. This celebrated

man may be taken as the representative of the English Philosophy of the time. His influence on speculative opinions in his own day was only second to that of Hobbes; while by and by it became paramount, being indeed, in regard to the leading problems of metaphysics, an offshoot from the same root. The philosophical value of Locke's system is a matter of controversy; especially between English thinkers on the one hand, and the followers of the Scottish school, or the German, on the other. But no one that is well acquainted with his "Essay concerning Human Understanding," can refuse him very high praise, as a patient and singularly acute cultivator of that experimental and tentative kind of psychological analysis, from which has been gathered so much of valuable fruit. His merits as a writer are not very distinguished, his style being neither elegant, vigorous, nor exact.

The Classical Learning of this period was respectable, but can hardly be called high, with the exception of Gale, till we reach the  
*b.* 1662. } name of Bentley, the greatest of all British scholars. He,  
*d.* 1742. } at the close of the seventeenth century, was in the flower of his age, and occupied in triumphantly closing his controversy on the genuineness of the Epistles of Phalaris; a curious instance of the possibility of giving importance to trifling questions, by using them as an occasion for raising greater ones. The dispute, indeed, besides bringing out Bentley's admirable contributions to Greek philology, history, and criticism, both began and ended in a discussion on the comparative importance of ancient and modern literature.

3. When we turn to the Historical field, we find several industrious collectors of materials, among whom may be named Wood, Dugdale, and Rymer. There is a dearth of compositions sufficiently original or systematic to deserve the name of history. But two of our most famous historians may most conveniently be referred to this period. Lord Clarendon's writings were partly composed before its beginning: those of Bishop Burnet extended beyond its close.  
*b.* 1608. } Clarendon's "History of the Rebellion" indicates by its  
*d.* 1674. } title the opinions of the author, one of the best and ablest men among the royalists, though too little of a partisan to be always acceptable to his own party. Its historical value is small in respect of minute accuracy, but great when we regard it as a picture of the times; and its portraits of characters, drawn with remarkable precision and spirit, give to the work a literary merit which is very distinguished. But he is not an animated narrator; and the mechanism of his style is very poor. He wants both the regularity of the newer writers and the vigour of the old: and of the improvements which were beginning to show themselves he may be said to have only one, namely, a less inverted method of arrangement. He

is not only tedious and verbose, but also complex in construction; heaping up parenthetical explanations till the meaning of a sentence has often to be guessed at like a riddle. He writes with the carelessness of a man of business; while his diplomatic and legal habits have disqualified him from gaining the clearness and precision which

b. 1643. } even memoranda of business-matters ought to possess. Bur-  
d. 1715. } net's "History of the Reformation" is one of the most thoroughly digested works of the century: and his carelessly written "History of His Own Times," while it expresses opinions very different from those of the writer named last before him, is extremely valuable for many of its facts, and for the cool shrewdness with which he describes the state of things about him. He has as little eloquence as Clarendon; but, writing long after him, he had acquired a style which partakes fairly of the improvements of his time.

4. Miscellaneous writings in prose were more numerous than important. Partly to the time of the commonwealth belong those of

b. 1593. } Izaak Walton, a London tradesman, who wrote some sin-  
d. 1683. } gularly interesting biographies, and the quaint and half-poetical treatise on Angling, through which his name, and that of his friend Cotton, are preserved and extensively known. Both in diction and in sentiment, these works remind us forcibly of the preceding age: and Walton, surviving Milton, might be held as finally closing the series of Old English prose writers.

John Evelyn, a highly accomplished and excellent man, wrote, in the leisure of wealth, several useful and tasteful works, the style of which is singularly polished for the time. In strong contrast both to "The Complete Angler" of Walton, and to Evelyn's "Sylva," were the numberless controversial pamphlets, newspaper essays, and translations, manufactured by Sir Roger L'Estrange. This venal man, and worthless scribbler, may serve as a specimen of the hack authors who became so numerous in his time, and of the kind of services which merited knighthood from the government of the Restored House of Stuart. But scurrility and vulgarity did not always fill up the place of talent. Two men of genuine wit and humour, whose versified compositions will immediately come in our way, were likewise writers of excellent prose. Samuel Butler, the unfortunate and ill-requited laureate of the royalists, threw his satire of the puritans and republicans into a metrical form, in his celebrated "Hudibras." But he left some exceedingly vigorous and witty prose writings; the best of which is a series of "Characters," resembling those with which we became acquainted

b. 1620. } in the preceding period. Andrew Marvell, the friend and  
d. 1678. } protector of Milton, and the member of parliament who astonished Charles the Second's ministers by refusing to be bribed,



was witty even in the letters in which he regularly reported his proceedings to his constituents in Hull. There is still greater force of wit, most successful in the form of sarcastic irony, in his satirical attacks on the High-Church opinions and doings.

Among those whose livelihood was earned by literature was, unfortunately both for his happiness, his fame, and his virtue, b. 1631.  
d. 1700. } John Dryden himself, the literary chief of the whole interval between Cromwell and Queen Anne. His prose writings, besides the comedies, are few, embracing, indeed, hardly anything beyond dedications and critical prefaces. In these, however, he not only taught principles of poetical art previously unknown to his countrymen, but showed the capabilities of the English tongue in a new light. He has passages which, while their air is almost perfectly modern, unite spirit with grace of style, as completely as any which modern times have been able to produce.

In regard to the poetical art, as in regard to more practical questions, Dryden's opinions were far from being fixed or consistent. But the position which he held, in most respects, will be understood from his "Essay of Dramatic Poesy;" which, while it may fairly stand as the earliest attempt in our language at systematizing the laws of poetry, was carefully written, and as carefully revised by the author. It is constructed, with much liveliness, in the form of a dialogue, the writer and three of the literary courtiers being the speakers. The main business of the conversation is a comparison between the English Drama and that of France, whose rules were now attracting much attention in England. On one point, the substitution of rhyme for our blank verse in tragedy, the decision is given in favour of the French practice; from which, however, at a later stage, Dryden himself departed. As to all other questions of importance, the victory is given to the speakers who defend the native drama; while a tribute of warm admiration is paid to Shakspeare and Jonson.\*

\* JOHN DRYDEN.

*From "An Essay of Dramatic Poesy:" published in 1668; and again, with revision, in 1684.*

*The extract is from a speech put into the mouth of Sir Charles Sedley, who, in the dialogue, is the advocate of the French Drama.*

And now I am speaking of Relations, I cannot take a fitter opportunity to add this in favour of the French; that they often use them with better judgment, and more *à propos*, than the English do. Not that I commend Narrations in general. But there are two sorts of them: one of those things which are antecedent to the play, and are related to make the conduct of it more clear to us: but it is a fault to choose such subjects for the stage as will force us on that rock; because we see they are seldom listened to by the



Much inferior to Dryden in vigour of thought, but not much  
*b.* 1628. } below him in the mechanism of style, was Sir William  
*d.* 1698. } Temple, who indeed may share with him the merit of hav-  
 ing founded regular English prose. Long employed as a statesman  
 and diplomatist, this accomplished person left few writings, besides  
 his correspondence, and his historical and statistical memoirs. His  
 favourite topics intrude themselves, and the minute manner of  
 treating everything is exhibited, in those miscellaneous Essays on  
 which chiefly his literary character rests. His essay "Of Garden-  
 ing" is full of good sense and good descriptions. In the essay  
 "Upon the Ancient and Modern Learning," and the supplementary  
 treatise, he takes the classical side; and the same opinions are sup-  
 ported, with much more of spirited writing, in the essay "Of Poetry."  
 In the latter only is any account taken of English Literature: and  
 it is treated in the fashion of a man who knew very little of it, and  
 secretly despised what he did know. Sidney, the oldest of our  
 audience, and that is many times the ruin of the play: for, being once let pass  
 without attention, the audience can never recover themselves to understand  
 the plot. And, indeed, it is somewhat unreasonable that they should be put  
 to so much trouble, as that, to comprehend what passes in their sight, they  
 must have recourse to what was done, perhaps, ten or twenty years ago.

But there is another sort of Relations, that is, of things happening in the  
 action of the play, and supposed to be done behind the scenes; and this is  
 many times both convenient and beautiful: for by it the French avoid the  
 tumult to which we are subject in England, by representing duels, battles,  
 and the like; which renders our stage too like the theatres where they fight  
 prizes. For what is more ridiculous, than to represent an army with a drum  
 and five men behind it; all which the hero of the other side is to drive in  
 before him? Or to see a duel fought, and one slain with two or three thrusts  
 of the foils, which we know are so blunted, that we might give a man an  
 hour to kill another in good earnest with them?

I have observed, that, in all our tragedies, the audience cannot forbear  
 laughing when the actors are to die: it is the most comic part of the whole  
 play. All passions may be lively represented on the stage; if, to the well  
 writing of them, the actor supplies a good-commanded voice, and limbs that  
 move easily, and without stiffness: but there are many actions which can  
 never be imitated to a just height. Dying, especially, is a thing which none  
 but a Roman gladiator could naturally perform on the stage, when he did  
 not imitate or represent, but do it: and therefore it is better to omit the re-  
 presentation of it.

The words of a good writer, which describe it lively, will make a deeper  
 impression of belief in us, than all the actor can insinuate into us, when he  
 seems to fall dead before us; as a poet, in the description of a beautiful  
 garden or a meadow, will please our imagination more than the place itself  
 can please our sight. When we see death represented, we are convinced it  
 is but fiction: but, when we hear it related, our eyes (the strongest witnesses)  
 are wanting, which might have undeceived us; and we are all willing to  
 favour the sleight, when the poet does not too grossly impose on us.

poet; Spenser is looked down on with a kind of compassion; and Shakspeare is just allowed to have had some merit in comedy.\* Wotton's answer to Temple, defending the literature of modern times, has, indeed, no brilliancy of any kind, and was ridiculed by the wits of the day: but it deserves honourable remembrance for its solid knowledge and sound judgment. The question was far from being thoroughly argued on either side.

#### POETICAL LITERATURE.

5. The example of symmetrical structure and artificial polishing, which had recently been set by the literature of France, evidently was not without influence, for good, on the whole, rather than evil, on the style of English Prose after the Restoration. The effects of Parisian taste on Poetry were not so beneficial.

On the English Drama, however, the rules of the French critics operated but slowly. The formal observance of the unities has never become general among us; and the reception of them hardly writers that is at all named, is declared to have been our greatest

#### \* SIR WILLIAM TEMPLE.

*From the "Essay of Poetry;" published in 1689.*

Whether it be that the fierceness of the Gothic humours or noise of their perpetual wars frighted it away, or that the unequal mixture of the modern languages would not bear it; certain it is, that the great heights and excellency both of Poetry and Music fell with the Roman Learning and Empire, and have never since recovered the admiration and applauses that before attended them. Yet, such as they are amongst us, they must be confessed to be the softest and sweetest, the most general and most innocent amusements of common time and life. They still find room in the courts of princes and the cottages of shepherds. They serve to revive and animate the dead calm of poor or idle lives, and to allay or divert the violent passions and perturbations of the greatest and busiest men. And both these effects are of equal use to human life: for the mind of man is like the sea, which is neither agreeable to the beholder nor the voyager in a calm or in a storm, but is so to both when a little agitated by gentle gales; and so the mind, when moved by soft and easy passions and affections.

I know very well, that many, who pretend to be wise by the forms of being grave, are apt to despise both Poetry and Music, as toys and trifles, too light for the use or entertainment of serious men. But whoever find themselves wholly insensible to these charms would, I think, do well to keep their own counsel, for fear of reproaching their own temper, and bringing the goodness of their natures, if not of their understandings, into question. It may be thought an ill sign, if not an ill constitution. While this world lasts, I doubt not but the pleasure and requests of these two entertainments will do so too; and happy those that content themselves with these, or and other so easy and innocent, and do not trouble the world or other men, because they cannot be quiet themselves though nobody hurts them.

took place, in any instance worth noting, till the early years of the eighteenth century. The separation of tragedy from comedy, which had already been practised often by the Old English Dramatists, became common much sooner. The French models by which our play-writers were first attracted, belonged to an older day, and a ruder school, than those of Racine and his followers in the regular drama. They prompted to Dryden the idea of his Heroic Plays, which are not unlike the wildest chivalrous romances, dressed up in modern sentimentalities, exaggerated into extravagant unreality of incident, and thrown into the form of dialogue with very little dramatic skill. All the French serious plays, regular as well as irregular, concurred in furnishing the unlucky example of rhymed dialogue; which however was not long followed, though supported for a time by all Dryden's energy.

The worst effect of the foreign models was that which they had, in the case not of Dryden only but of our dramatic writers in general for several generations, on the notion which was entertained as to the true character of the dramatic poem. Our Tragic Dramas, while the writers aimed sedulously at making them poetical, really left off being dramatic. In a few years after the Restoration, most of them had ceased to be pictures of human beings in action: they were no more than descriptions of such pictures. They became, in their whole conception, imitations of that declamatory manner, which makes a regular French play to be little else than a series of beautiful recitations. While, likewise, the tragic writers, and Dryden himself among them, speedily returned to the use of blank verse, the Comic writers, guided perhaps in part by the undramatic character which the serious dialogue had assumed, sank contentedly into familiar and unimaginative prose.

On Dryden's Plays all the praise has been bestowed that is deserved, when it is said that the serious ones contain many very striking and poetical pieces of declamation, finely versified. Yet, in this walk as in others, Dryden was the literary chief of his time. His Comedies, doubtless, are bad in all respects, not morally only, but as dramas. They are much worse than those of Shadwell, the rival he so much disliked, in which there is a great deal of clumsy painting that looks very like real low-life. There is a greater display of poetry and vehemence at least, if not of nature or of pathos, in those Tragic Plays, in which Dryden imitated the rhyme of the French stage and the extravagance of the French romances: and these, chiefly his earliest dramas, are far more spirited than those which he afterwards couched in blank verse.

Lee, though some eloquent passages from his tragedies have sur-

vived; was really nothing more than a poor likeness of Dryden. There is something much nearer to a revival of the ancient strength of feeling; though alloyed by false sentiment and poetic poverty, in the "Orphan" and "Venice Preserved" of the unhappy Otway. Congreve, also, showed the power of writing the language of tragedy at least, if not of breathing its spirit very strongly: and there is not a little of nature and pathos in Southerne.

In Comedy, very soon, the fame of Dryden and Shadwell was eclipsed by that of a small knot of dramatists, systematically adopting prose instead of the old metrical language. The works of these authors are, morally, among the foulest things by which the literature of any nation was ever disgraced. But, if this kind of dramatic writing is to be excused for wanting altogether the poetical or ideal, some of them must be acknowledged to have high skill as works of art. They are excellent specimens of that which has been called the Comedy of Manners, a dramatic exhibition of the externals of society. But vice is inextricably interwoven into the texture of all; alike in the broad humour and lively incident of Wycherley, (the most vigorous of the set,) and in the wit of Congreve, the character-painting of Vanbrugh, and the lively, easy, invention of Farquhar. It is difficult to avoid believing, that, in their pictures of licentiousness and meanness, those men caricatured even the heartless and treacherous voluptuaries for whose diversion they wrote.

6. When we turn from the Drama to other kinds of Poetry, we observe similar changes of taste; changes which affected the art injuriously, and which, coming immediately from France, would yet, like the changes in the drama, have probably come soon though no such example had accelerated them.

That, in constructing verse as in constructing prose, increased attention was paid to correctness and refinement, was a step of improvement: and, although the writers of Louis the Fourteenth's court led the way, the process had to be performed independently and with original resources.

The mischievous changes related both to the themes of poetry and to its forms. In neither of these respects can the true functions of the art be forgotten, without serious injury to the value of the work: and in both respects the poet, yielding, as the imaginative mind must always yield, to the prompting of the world he lives in, may be either raised above his natural power, or sunk below it, by the temper and opinions of his time. An age must be held unpoetical, and cannot produce great poetical works, if its poetry chooses insufficient topics; and especially if it attempts nothing higher than the imaginative embellishment of the present. We



have seen how very differently the best poets of the Elizabethan reign occupied themselves. But in those whom we have now reached, the low choice was continually recurring; and it produced a constant crop of poems, celebrating events of contemporary history or incidents in the lives of individuals. Again, the form may be wrongly chosen as well as the theme; and that either through a wrong choice of the theme, or without it. The Narrative Poem and the Dramatic are unquestionably the two kinds of poetry, in which may be worked out most powerfully that imaginative excitement of pleasing emotion, which is the immediate and characteristic end of the art. It is to those two kinds that all the greatest poems have belonged; and, where the cultivation of those kinds is rare, the poetry of the age cannot attain a high position. We have seen how zealously both were cultivated in the palmy days of our old poetry: we see a very different sight in the days of the Restoration. The drama, as we have learned, had lost, in great part, its poetic significance and elevation: original narrative poetry, as we next find, was hardly known. Again, next below the two highest kinds, stands Lyrical Poetry; and it, although it was now cultivated, was not the favourite sort, nor was treated in a poetical spirit. Almost all the most famous poems of the day may be referred to the class of the Didactic. Now, it must be asserted, the prevalence of didactic poetry is a palpable symptom of an unpoetical age; of an age that either misunderstands theoretically the function of poetry, or wants imaginative strength to do its part in the creation of poetical works. Satire itself, available as it has been made incidentally by poetic minds eminently endowed, cannot rank much higher than the didactic in the scale of poetical purity. In it, likewise, the last half of the seventeenth century was abundant.

7. If all versifiers were poets, our muster-roll from the reigns of Charles the Second and his next successors might vie in number with that of any period equally long. But it would be diverting, were it not so mortifying, to remark how dead a level the verse-making of those forty years maintains, when we have set aside a very few of the works.

Amidst those dwarfish rhymers there yet lingered, for a time, some of the august shapes of a former age. Milton still walked on his solitary course, like one who had lost his way, a benighted traveller on a dreary road. Waller's odes and occasional verses show him to have been more at home. But, of names not already noted, there are positively no more than two or three, that really require or reward commemoration in studies so general as ours. It was a strangely pregnant evidence both of narrowness in thought,



and of dulness of ear to the higher tones of the lyre, that one of the most famous poems of the day should have been an "Essay on Translated Verse." The author, Lord Roscommon, was honourably distinguished by the moral purity of his writings: and the same merit, with that of much felicity, both in feeling and in diction, may rescue likewise from forgetfulness the small poems of Marvell.\*

b. 1612. } Butler's Hudibras, which perhaps belongs more properly  
d. 1680. } to the age before, is a work of genius, and a remarkable phenomenon in the history of our literature. His pungent wit; his extraordinary ingenuity in drawing whim and jest out of the driest stores of learning; his singular command of apt and sterling words:

\* ANDREW MARVELL.

*The Emigrants' Hymn.*

Where the remote Bermudas ride  
In th' ocean's bosom unesp'y'd;  
From a small boat that row'd along,  
The list'ning winds received this song.

"What should we do but sing His praise,  
That led us through the wat'ry maze  
Unto an isle so long unknown,  
And yet far kinder than our own!  
He gave us this eternal spring,  
Which here enamels every thing;  
And sends the fowls to us in care  
On daily visits through the air.  
He hangs in shades the orange bright,  
Like golden lamps in a green night;  
And does in the pomegranates close  
Jewels more rich than Ormuz shows.  
With cedars, chosen by his hand  
From Lebanon, He stores the land;  
And makes the hollow seas that roar,  
Proclaim the ambergris on shore.

He cast (of which we rather boast)  
The Gospel's pearl upon our coast;  
And in these rocks for us did frame  
A temple where to sound His name.

Oh! let our voice His praise exalt,  
Till it arrive at heaven's vault;  
Which then, perhaps, rebounding, may  
Echo beyond the Mexique bay!"

Thus sung they, in the English boat,  
A holy and a cheerful note;  
And all the way, to guide their chime,  
With falling oars they kept the time.

these are rare endowments. But his, though shedding many beautiful gleams of fancy, is no poetic vein that yields jewels of the first lustre. He has justly been described as having followed out, in the track of the ludicrous, the turn for strained analogies which had been indulged by Cowley and his predecessors in a serious direction. We read Butler to be amused ; and not seldom we are instructed also, and made to think curiously, if not always to profit. But such poets can never hold more than a low step, in the path which leads us upward towards the ethereal region of imagination : and the time must be a poor one which yields no brighter fruits than b. 1661.  
d. 1721. those we gather from such writings. Prior, whose time of authorship went forward into the next generation, may be named, along with Butler, as showing, in his lighter pieces, wit of a much less manly kind. His serious poems are chiefly meritorious for their facility of phrase and melody.

8. The life of Dryden is a scene on which we cannot look back without respectful sorrow. A man of very high endowments, both as a poet and as a thinker, condemned to labour for a corrupt generation, and yielding with melancholy consciousness to the temptations which beset him, receives from posterity hardly any higher fame than that of having improved our prose style and our versification. Indeed, most of his works in verse are perhaps classed too high, when they are called poems. They are, with few exceptions, rather essays or disquisitions, couched in fine and vigorous verse, and containing here and there passages of very great poetical beauty. The most vague description of his best works shows how utterly impossible it was, to construct poetry out of such materials. His "Annus Mirabilis," celebrating, with great animation, the memorable year 1666, is an effusion of historical panegyric. The "Absalom and Achitophel," versified with such admirable spirit, and so astonishingly rich in poetical portraiture, is a satire on the unfortunate Duke of Monmouth and his adviser Shaftesbury. The "Hind and Panther," an allegory, ill sustained, but full both of poetical and satirical force, was an argument in verse to justify the writer's own recent change of religion. One of the pieces in which the poetic character is most thoroughly sustained, is the well-known ode on Alexander's Feast ; which yet is not conceived in a very pure or high tone of lyric inspiration. His fancy was often kindled to very happy flights, when he was occupied in recasting and embellishing the thoughts of others. We thus find many of his finest images, with an ease of style such as he hardly reached elsewhere, in those modernizations of Boccaccio and Chaucer, which he called his "Fables." Some of these contain very fine

passages, both original and imitated; with not a few symptoms, especially in his dealings with the Canterbury Tales, that betray a very imperfect sense of the merit of his model. His translation of the *Æneid*, as imperfect a picture of the original as Pope's of the *Iliad*, is indeed deficient in grace, but full of vigour; and it equals any of his works as a specimen of the heroic couplet, a measure never so well written in our language, either before Dryden or since.\*

\* JOHN DRYDEN.

I. *From the "Knight's Tale," modernized and altered from Chaucer.*

1. THE INTRODUCTION TO THE TOURNAMENT.

The day approached when Fortune should decide  
The important enterprise, and give the bride :  
For now the rivals round the world had sought,  
And each his number well-appointed brought.  
The nations far and near contend in choice,  
And send the flower of war by public voice;  
That, after or before, were never known  
Such chiefs, as each an army seemed alone.  
Beside the champions, all of high degree,  
Who knighthood loved and deeds of chivalry,  
Thronged to the lists, and envied to behold  
The names of others, not their own, enrolled.  
Nor seems it strange ; for every noble knight  
Who loves the fair, and is endued with might,  
In such a quarrel would be proud to fight.  
There breathes not scarce a man on British ground,  
(An isle for love and arms of old renowned,)  
But would have sold his life to purchase fame,  
To Palamon or Arcite sent his name ;  
And, had the land selected of the best,  
Half had come hence, and let the world provide the rest.

2. THE DEATH OF ARCITE.

———"Have pity on the faithful Palamon!"

This was his last : for death came on amain,  
And exercised below his iron reign :  
Then upward to the seat of life he goes :  
Sense fled before him : what he touched he froze :  
Yet could he not his closing eyes withdraw,  
Though less and less of Emily he saw :  
So, speechless for a little while he lay ;  
Then grasped the hand he held, and sighed his soul away.

II. *From "Theodore and Honoria," versified from Boccaccio's prose.*

THE APPARITION.

While listening to the murmuring leaves he stood,  
More than a mile immersed within the wood,

9. The poetical character of this illustrious but unfortunate man has been portrayed, with equal kindliness and justice, by one who himself founded a poetical school very unlike his.

"The distinguishing characteristic of Dryden's genius seems to

At once the wind was laid ; the whispering sound  
Was dumb ; a rising earthquake rock'd the ground :  
With deeper brown the grove was overspread ;  
A sudden horror seized his giddy head,  
And his ears tingled, and his colour fled.  
Nature was in alarm : some danger nigh  
Seem'd threaten'd, though unseen to mortal eye.  
Unused to fear, he summon'd all his soul,  
And stood collected in himself, and whole :

Not long : for soon a whirlwind rose around,  
And from afar he heard a screaming sound,  
As of a dame distressed, who cried for aid,  
And fill'd with loud laments the secret shade.

A thicket close beside the grove there stood,  
With briars and brambles choked and dwarfish wood :  
From thence the noise, which now approaching near,  
With more distinguished notes invades his ear.  
He raised his head, and saw a beauteous maid,  
With hair dishevelled, issuing through the shade :  
Two mastiffs, gaunt and grim, her flight pursued,  
And oft their fasten'd fangs in blood imbrued :  
Oft they came up and pinch'd her tender side :  
—"Mercy, oh mercy, heaven !" she ran, and cried.  
When heaven was named, they loosed their hold again :  
Then sprung she forth : they followed her amain.

III. *From "Absalom and Achitophel."*

CHARACTER OF ELKANAH SETTLE, A SMALL POET OF THE DAY.

Doeg, though without knowing how or why,  
Made still a blundering kind of melody ;  
Spurred boldly on, and dash'd through thick and thin,  
Through sense and nonsense, never out nor in :  
Free from all meaning, whether good or bad,  
And, in one word, heroically mad.  
He was too warm on picking-work to dwell,  
But fagoted his notions as they fell :  
And if they rhymed and rattled, all was well.  
Spiteful he is not, though he wrote a satire ;  
For still there goes some thinking to ill-nature.  
He needs no more than birds or beasts to think :  
All his occasions are to eat and drink.  
If he call rogue and rascal from a garret,  
He means you no more mischief than a parrot :  
The words for friend and foe alike were made ;  
To fetter them in verse is all his trade.

have been the power of reasoning, and of expressing the result in appropriate language. This may seem slender praise: yet these were the talents that led Bacon into the recesses of philosophy, and conducted Newton to the cabinet of nature. The prose works of Dryden bear repeated evidence to his philosophical powers. \* \* The early habits of his education and poetical studies gave his researches somewhat too much of a metaphysical character; and it was a consequence of his mental acuteness, that his dramatic personages often philosophized or reasoned when they ought only to have felt. The more lofty, the fiercer, the more ambitious feelings, seem also to have been his favourite studies. \* \* Though his poetry, from the nature of his subjects, is in general rather ethic and didactic than narrative; yet no sooner does he adopt the latter style of composition, than his figures and his landscapes are presented to the mind with the same vivacity as the flow of his reasoning, or the acute metaphysical discrimination of his characters. \* \* The satirical powers of Dryden were of the highest order. He draws his arrow to the head, and dismisses it straight upon his object of aim. But, while he seized, and dwelt upon, and aggravated, all the evil features of his subject, he carefully retained just as much of its laudable traits, as preserved him from the charge of want of candour, and fixed down the resemblance upon the party. And thus, instead of unmeaning caricatures, he presents portraits which cannot be mistaken, however unfavourable ideas they may convey of the originals. The character of Shaftesbury, both as Achitophel, and as drawn in 'The Medal,' bears peculiar witness to this assertion. \* \* The 'Fables' of Dryden are the best examples of his talents as a narrative poet; those powers of composition, description, and narration, which must have been called into exercise by the Epic Muse, had his fate allowed him to enlist among her votaries. The account of the procession of the fairy chivalry in the 'Flower and the Leaf;' the splendid description of the champions who came to assist at the tournament in the 'Knight's Tale;' the account of the battle itself, its alternations and issue: if they cannot be called improvements on Chaucer, are nevertheless so spirited a transfusion of his ideas into modern verse, as almost to claim the merit of originality. Many passages might be shown, in which this praise may be carried still higher, and the merit of invention added to that of imitation. Such is, in the 'Knight's Tale,' the description of the commencement of the tourney, which is almost entirely original; and such are most of the ornaments in the translations from Boccaccio, whose prose fictions demanded more additions from the poet than the exuberant imagery of Chaucer.



To select instances would be endless : but every reader of poetry has by heart the description of Iphigenia asleep : nor are the lines in 'Theodore and Honoria,' which describe the approach of the apparition, and its effects upon animated and inanimated nature, even before it becomes visible, less eminent for beauties of the terrific order."\*

\* Sir Walter Scott : Life of Dryden.

## CHAPTER IX.

## THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

A. D. 1702—A. D. 1800.

SECTION FIRST : THE LITERARY CHARACTER AND CHANGES  
OF THE PERIOD.

1. Character of the Period as a Whole—Its Relations to Our Own Time.—
2. Literary Character of its First Generation—The Age of Queen Anne and George I.—3. Literary Character of its Second and Third Generations—From the Accession of George II.—4. The Prose Style of the First Generation—Addison—Swift.—5. The Prose Style of the Second and Third Generations—Johnson.

1. No period in our literary history has been, at various times, estimated so variously as the Eighteenth Century. If it was overvalued by those who lived in it, it is assuredly undervalued in our day ; a natural result of circumstances, but not the less a result to be regretted. In regard to ages more remote, the beautifying charm of antiquity tempts us to err, oftenest, by entertaining for their great men and great deeds, although the principles may be very unlike ours, a respect exceeding that which is their due. But the century immediately preceding our own is not far enough distant to be revered as ancient ; while its distance is sufficient to have caused, in the modes of thinking and varieties of taste, changes so material as to incapacitate us for sympathizing readily with its characteristics.

It is true, no doubt, that in England, as elsewhere in Europe, the temper of the eighteenth century was cold, dissatisfied, and hypercritical. Alike in the theory of literature and in that of society, in the theory of knowledge and in that of religion, old principles were peremptorily called in question ; and the literary man and the statesman, the philosopher and the theologian, alike found the task allotted them to be mainly that of attack or defence. It is true, likewise, that the opinions which kept the firmest hold on the minds

of the nation, and the sentiments which those opinions prompted, were quite alien to the speculative or the heroic; and that they received adequate literary expression, in a philosophy which acknowledged no higher motive than utility, and in a kind of poetry which found its favourite field in didactic discussion, and sank in narrative into the comic and domestic. It is further true, (and it is a fact which had a very wide influence,) that, in all departments of literary composition, but most of all in poetry, the form had come to be more regarded than the matter; that melody of rhythm, and elegance of phrase, and symmetry of parts, were held to be higher excellences than rich fancy or fervid emotion.

Whatever may be the amount of likeness or unlikeness which, as a whole, this description bears to the character of our own time, it is plain that there are points of dissimilarity, sufficient to make us look with indifference on many literary phenomena which were deeply interesting to those who first beheld them. It is certain, also, that an age like the eighteenth century could not give birth to literature possessing the loftiest and most striking qualities, either of poetry or of eloquence. But it was an age whose monuments we cannot overlook, without losing much instruction as well as much pleasure. It increased prodigiously the knowledge previously possessed by mankind, especially in those fields which lie furthest from that of literature: it swept away a vast number of wrong opinions by which all preceding knowledge had been alloyed, and this in literature as well as in other walks of thought: it produced many literary works excellent both in matter and in expression, and especially excellent in those qualities which are chiefly wanting in the literature of our time; and it exercised on the English language, partly for good and partly for evil, an influence which is shown in every sentence we now speak or write.

2. The diversities which took place in the English Literature of the Eighteenth Century, diversities in opinion, in sentiment, and in taste, diversities in matter and in style, may in a general way be understood sufficiently, if we regard the whole period as portioned off into Three successive Stages, the average length of which will thus be about a generation in the life of man.

The First Generation of the time was that which is currently named from Queen Anne, but which should be taken as including also the reign of her successor. Our notion of its literary character is chiefly derived from the poetry of Pope, and the prose of Addison and his friends. It was long regarded among us as worthy to be compared with the Augustan age in the literature of Rome; and it was so compared by critics who intended thus to intimate its superiority,

not only to all that had gone before, but to all that was likely to follow. There was really not a little likeness between the ancient age and the modern ; and the likeness prevails especially in the tendency to didactic coldness which pervaded the writings of both, and in the anxious attention paid to correctness of style and formal symmetry of method. But the works of Virgil and his contemporaries were not the noblest efforts of the Roman mind : still less could England, which had already given birth to Chaucer and Shakspeare, to Spenser and Milton, to the Old Divines and other masters of eloquence, be believed to have reached the culminating point of her poetry in Pope's satires and didactic verses, or that of her prose in the light elegancies of the Essayists. In philosophical thinking itself, which is seldom taken into account in those popular estimates, Berkeley and Clarke, though we shall probably place them higher than Hobbes and Locke, will by few be estimated as standing above Bacon.

In its own region, a region which is not low, though a good way below the highest, the lighter and more popular section in the literature of Queen Anne's time is distinguished and valuable. The readers it addressed were sought only in the upper ranks of society ; and the success which attended its teaching was equally honourable to the instructors and beneficial to the pupils. Its lessons were full of good sense and correct taste ; they insinuated as much information as an audience chiefly composed of fashionable or literary idlers could be expected to accept ; and, never affecting imaginative or impassioned flights that were alike beyond the sphere of the teachers and that of the taught, they were generally pervaded by right and amiable feelings, and by well-directed though not widely-reaching sympathies. As literary artists, those writers attained an excellence as eminent as any that can be reached by art, when it is neither inspired by enthusiastic genius, nor employed on majestic themes ; but an excellence which, through the want of such inspiration and such topics, was of a negative rather than a positive cast. Subjecting themselves cordially to the laws of that French school of criticism, of which Dryden and his contemporaries had been in part disciples, they exhibited, perhaps more thoroughly than the literary men of Louis the Fourteenth's court, the results to which those laws tend : and their polish, and grace, and sensitive refinement of taste, were accompanied in not a few of them, and in some quite overpowered, by a national and masculine vigour, of which the French court-literature was altogether destitute. In its moral tone, again, the early part of the eighteenth century, actually much better than the age before it, communicated a better tone to its

literature. It is much purer, at least, if not always so lofty as we might wish to see it.

3. The Second Generation of the century may be reckoned, loosely, as contained in the reign of George the Second. It was a time inferior to that of Queen Anne for care and skill in the details of literary composition : but it was much more remarkable, in almost all departments of literature, for vigour of thinking, for variety and ingenuity in the treatment of themes, and for the exhibition, in not a few quarters, of genuine poetic fancy and susceptibility. The clearer accents in which poetry began to speak, awakened, doubtless, no more than faint echoes in the minds of the listeners : but the efforts of the seekers after truth, not being too ambitious for the temper of the time, were, on the whole, justly appreciated.

Samuel Johnson, entering on his toils soon after the beginning of this period, had produced his principal works before its close ; although his influence, whether on thinking or on style, was not matured till later. In singular contrast to his writings, stand those of the novelists : Richardson alone having any thing in common with him ; while Fielding, Smollett, and Sterne, are equally distant from the dignified pomp of his manner, and from the ascetic elevation of his morality. It deserves to be remembered, too, that a more solemn spirit was beginning to be prevalent in thinking ; and that, in the same generation with the looseness of the novels and the scepticism of Hume, the manly reasoning of Butler was employed in defence of sacred truth, and the stern dissent of Wesley and Whitefield was entered against religious deadness. Poetry began to stir with a new life. Johnson himself belonged essentially, in his versified compositions, to the school of Pope ; but a nobler ambition animated Young and Akenside, and a finer poetic sense was perceptible in Thomson, Gray, and Collins.

About the accession of George the Third, we may conveniently consider ourselves as entering on a new development of literary elements, and as approaching, with accelerated rapidity, the state of things which arose about the close of the century.

This Third Generation of the eighteenth century was by no means so fertile in literary genius as either of the other two. But some of the men who were its sons were very richly gifted ; and the tone both of thinking and of feeling was such as we can readily sympathize with. The earliest of its remarkable writers were the historians, headed by Hume, Robertson, and Gibbon ; writers whose works, some of them defective as records of truth, have hardly ever been exceeded as literary compositions of their class. In philosophical thinking, the efforts were both active and varied. They embraced



ethics in Paley and Adam Smith; the theory of public wealth in the great work of the latter of those two; psychology and metaphysics in Reid and the other founders of the Scottish school. Criticism, conducted by Johnson during his old age in the narrow spirit which he had learned in youth, was now called on to give account of its principles; and poetry began to traverse paths which she had long deserted, with some which she had never trodden before. In the roll of the poets who adorned those forty years, we read successively the names of Goldsmith, Cowper, and Burns.

4. There is one feature of our literature on which the influence of the eighteenth century has been great and permanent, namely, the character of our Prose Style. In the course of that time, there were formed two dissimilar manners of writing, each of which has contributed towards the formation of all that is distinctive in our more modern forms of expression. The earlier of those manners we may understand by studying the language of Addison, or still better by comparing his with that of Swift. The later of the two is instanced most distinctly in the language of Johnson; if indeed we should not rather consider him as carrying its peculiarities to excess.

In style, as in so much else, the writers of Queen Anne's time pursued the track of their predecessors, but cultivated successfully the ground on which the latter had done only the rough work of pioneers. Dryden and his followers had cleared away, almost entirely, the quaintness and pedantry of the times preceding the Restoration, and had written with neatness or attained elegance whenever they wrote with care. But there was in all of them an inclination to looseness of structure and meanness of phrase, which, in the more hasty writers, degenerated, as it has aptly been said, into what we now call slang.

Addison and his friends aimed assiduously at rising above this, yet without rising higher than the ordinary language of refined social life. Their great merit of style consisted in their correct knowledge and accurate reproduction of those genuine idiomatic peculiarities of our speech, which had been received into the conversation of intelligent and instructed men. They wrote such English as an accomplished person of their day would naturally have spoken. This is true of all of them, though most emphatically so of Addison. It is true of Swift himself, whose worst coarseness of matter hardly ever betrays him into offensive coarseness of expression. Yet there are great diversities among them; and these two leaders of the band furnish apt instances of the extremes: Addison being admirable for ease and grace, but sometimes feeble through fastidiousness; Swift being often clumsy, but always vigor-

ous and pointed, and presenting a greater stock of good and familiar words and idioms than any other writer of our language.

It is instructive to remark, that the principles on which this style was constructed, exposed it to an imminent risk of contracting serious faults in the hands of writers not more than usually adroit. Seemingly easy, it was really very difficult. If the author dealt with familiar topics, or aimed at nothing more than a colloquial tone, he was liable to fall back into the old defects of vulgarism or irregular looseness; faults to which the nature of the style directly disposed it, and from which the chief himself had not always been free. If, again, the kind of topic, or any other motive, tempted towards elevation of style, the adaptation of the familiar language to this new exigency was apt to cause a complete evaporation of that easy and unforced union of extreme clearness with sufficient strength, which, almost everywhere, stamped so firmly the style of the skilful model.

5. It was not to be expected that the colloquial elegance of Addison should be inherited by any successor, nor perhaps that the popularity of such a style should long survive the discredit thrown on it by a series of bad imitations. The case was, that, by the middle of the century, the new style, of which Johnson became the characteristic example, was both the most common and the most admired.

His writings, indeed, gave to his style, during his old age and after his death, a fame which made it ridiculous through the undesigned caricatures perpetrated by his copyists. But the features imitated by such writers are, in many points, merely the accidental characteristics produced by Johnson's own manner of thinking; and we must not be tempted by them, either to misapprehend what was the real character of the style, or to believe that he or any one person whatever was the sole parent of it.

It deviated from the style of the age before it, both in idiom and in vocabulary.

In Idiom, its tendency was, to abandon the familiar and native characteristics of the Saxon part of our language, and to fall into those expressions and modes of arrangement, which may be said to be common to all the modern European tongues and particularly inherent in none. In Addison's *Spectator* there are sentences and phrases innumerable, which we could not possibly translate, with literal faithfulness, into any other language of Europe: in Johnson's *Rambler* there is hardly perhaps a clause or a sentence but could be transferred, by close rendering, to the French or Italian, the modern tongues whose idiomatic structure is farthest

distant from that of the English. The change in idiom thus described can hardly be attributed at all to any special influence exercised by Johnson. It is also to be remembered that it has had, on the speech of more recent times, an effect much wider and more permanent than the other class of changes.

In the changes on the Vocabulary, Johnson's writings operated much more actively; although here, also, all that he did was to accelerate the working of a tendency already existing, and closely allied to that which caused the idiomatic transformations. By others as well as by him, though by none so much, large use was made of words derived from the Latin. A very considerable proportion of such words had been formed by the writers who belonged to the first half of the seventeenth century, but were become obsolete in the course of the hundred years that had since elapsed. All that Johnson and his contemporaries did as to these, was to revive the use of them, and thus, in a certain degree, to throw our diction back on its older character. A good many others were new in the tongue; but those of this group were by no means so numerous as they have sometimes been believed to be. The new importations and the restorations of the old were alike prompted by various motives. A few of these terms may really have been required, for the expression of new facts. But, in a large majority of cases, there were already words denoting the same ideas; and what was gained was not so much as increase of precision, but only, in addition to the effect of novelty, greater impressiveness and pomp. These attributes of style were held valuable, when language was beginning to be wanting in grace and nature, and needed other qualities to make up for the loss.

## CHAPTER X.

## THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

## SECTION SECOND : THE LITERATURE OF THE FIRST GENERATION.

A. D. 1702—A. D. 1727.

Anne,.....1702-1714.  
 George I.,.....1714-1727.

POETRY. 1. The Drama—Non-Dramatic Poetry—Its Artificial Character—Minor Poets.—2. Alexander Pope—Characteristics of his Genius and Poetry.—3. Pope's Works—His Early Poems—Poems of Middle Age—His Later Poems.—PROSE. 4. Theologians—Philosophers—Clarke's Natural Theology—Bishop Berkeley's Idealism—Shaftesbury—Bolingbroke.—5. Miscellaneous Prose—Occasional Writings—Defoe and Robinson Crusoe—Swift's Works and Literary Character—Other Prose Satires.—6. The Periodical Essayists—Addison and Steele—The Spectator—Its Character—Its Design.

## POETICAL LITERATURE.

1. IN our study of the Poetry of Queen Anne's time, the Drama scarcely deserves more than a parenthesis. The one pleasant point about it is the improvement in morals, which was shown by the Comedies, although accompanied by great want of delicacy both in manners and in language. That the ethical tone was high, however, cannot be asserted of a time, in which the most famous works of the kind were Gay's equivocal "Beggar's Opera," and the "Careless Husband" of Cibber. Nor are these, or any other comic dramas of that day, comparable in ability to those of the best writers of the age immediately before them. In Tragedy, the first noticeable fact was, the appearance of Rowe's "Fair Penitent," which has already been noticed as an impudent but clever plagiarism from Massinger. In Addison's celebrated "Cato," the strict rules of the French stage became triumphant, and co-operated with the natural coldness of the author, in producing a series of stately and impressive speeches hardly in any sense deserving to be called dramatic. Young's "Revenge" had much more of tragic passion; though it wanted almost entirely that force of characterization, which

seemed to have been buried with the old dramatists, and which had not even in them been the strongest point.

When we turn from the Drama, we find some Minor Poets, who should not be altogether overlooked. Such were Gay, whose name is preserved by his "Fables," cheerful pieces of no great moment; and Somerville, whose blank-verse poem, "The Chase," is not quite forgotten. Swift's octosyllabic satires and occasional pieces, as excellent as his prose writings for their diction, are quite guiltless of the essence of poetry.

The Heroic Measure of our poetic language, written by Dryden ruggedly and irregularly, but with a noble roundness and variety of modulation, was now treated in another fashion, which continued to prevail throughout the greater part of the century. Two qualities were chiefly aimed at; smoothness of melody, and brief pointedness of expression. The master in this school was Pope, whose versification has been described by a more recent poet, fairly on the whole, though with somewhat of the affection of a disciple. "That his rhythm and manner are the very best in the whole range of our poetry, need not be asserted. He has a gracefully peculiar manner; though it is not calculated to be an universal one: and where indeed shall we find the style of poetry, that could be pronounced an exclusive model for every composer? His pauses have little variety; and his phrases are too much weighed in the balance of antithesis. But let us look to the spirit that points his antitheses, and to the rapid precision of his thoughts; and we shall forgive him for being too antithetic and sententious."\*

The same turn, with less both of poetry and of terseness, is shown by other poets, some of whom began to write before Pope. Of these, Parnell comes nearest to him in manner; Ambrose Phillips was a particularly pleasing versifier; and Addison's best poem, the Letter from Italy, catches, from the fascinating theme, more warmth of feeling than its author has elsewhere shown in verse. Within this period fall the later works of Sir Richard Blackmore; who, although his poetic feebleness, as well as his heaviness of thought and language, made him a tempting butt for the witty men of his time, deserves remembrance on other grounds. Amidst the licence which followed the Restoration, he had vindicated the cause of goodness by the example which all his writings furnished: in a time when poetry was hardly ever narrative, he ventured to compose regular epics: and in his didactic poems he rose above the trivialities that were universally popular, and, as in his "Creation," touched the highest religious topics.

\* Campbell: Specimens of the British Poets.



2. It has gravely been asked whether Pope was a poet. They  
*b. 1688.* } who put the question, expecting to compel an answer in  
*d. 1744.* } the negative, must have fallen into some confusion in  
 their use of words. But, if they ask, with a similar design, whether he was a great poet, or a poet of the first order, we shall tell the truth in answering them as they wish. We might perhaps say, further, that the works which he has given us do not possess nearly all the value, which his fine genius might have imparted to them.

There abound, in his poems, passages beautifully poetical; passages which convey to us, on the wings of the sweetest verse, exquisite thoughts, or dazzling images, or feelings delicately pleasing. Still more frequent are vigorous portraits of character, and sketches of social oddities, and evidences, widely various, of shrewd observation and reflective good-sense. The diction, almost everywhere, is as highly finished as the versification. Further, if we turn from the details of a work to its aspect as a whole, we can hardly ever fail to admire the care and skill with which the parts are disposed and united.

Amidst all these excellences, we want, or find but seldom, those others, in virtue of which poetry holds her prerogative as the soother and elevator of the human soul. Those few works of his which communicate to us, with unity and sequence, the characteristic pleasure of poetic art, yet, (it cannot but be allowed,) raise that pleasure from excipients of the least dignified kind that can excite it at all. We are wafted into no bright world of imagination, rapt into no dream of strong passion, seldom raised into any high region of moral thought. If emotion is shown by the poet or his personages, it is slight; if fancy is excited, it is avowedly but in sport. Oftenest, however, it is only by fits and starts that we are at all tempted towards a poetical mood. The passages which make the poetry, are but occasional intervals of diversion from trains of observation or strokes of satire. If the words here used resemble those which occurred to us when we glanced at the works of Dryden, it is because a strong likeness prevails between the things described.

For this continual alloy of Pope's poetry by non-poetical ingredients, several reasons may be assigned, all of them common to him with the other poets of his day. In the first place, they were agreed in setting a higher value on skill of execution, than on originality or vigour of conception. He himself prized his lively fancy and fine susceptibility much less than his delicacy of phrase and his melodious versification. Secondly, those poets abstained systematically from all attempts at exciting strongly either imagina-

tion or feeling. No group of writers, calling themselves poets, could have shunned more anxiously the heroic and the tragic. It has been said that Pope never tried to be pathetic except twice; and this is scarcely an unfair description of his tone of sentiment. All the poetry of his school was carefully prepared for a refined and somewhat finical class of readers, who shrunk from the idea of being called on to fancy any scenes, more stormy than those of their own level and easy life. Thirdly, there was also, arising in part out of this disinclination to passionate excitement, a constant tendency to make poetry lose that representative character in which it appeals directly to the imagination, and to force it on assuming avowedly and principally the function of communicating knowledge. This tendency moulded the whole form of almost every work then written in verse. Satires on men or opinions, ethical treatises, or discussions on questions affecting the theory of literature, were written in good verse, and with much prosaic good sense; and a few passages of an imaginative or sentimental cast, often truly and intensely poetical, were thrown in here and there, figuring as ornaments, rather than as essential parts of the design.

3. The reflectiveness and polish of Pope's poetry might have led us to suppose, that his genius, like that of Dryden, must have come slowly to maturity. But this was not the case. His life, indeed, was a short one, and full of bodily suffering: and all his best works were written before he was forty years old.

Nor do they give evidence of decided progress in any of the qualifications of the poet, unless those minor ones which cannot but be improved by practice. The "Pastorals," the earliest of them, are merely boyish imitations: and in the "Windsor Forest," likewise in great part an effusion of early youth, he evidently feels but little at home among the landscapes of the fields and woodlands, scarcely becoming poetical till he turns away to contemplate historical events. The taste, both of the poet and of the times, is yet more clearly shown in his "Essay on Criticism," published before he had attained his twenty-first year. It is very instructive to observe, that the topic of this poem was chosen, not by a man of mature years and trained reflection, but by an ambitious boy who had not yet emerged from his teens. Nor is the execution less ripe than the design. None of his works unites, more happily, regularity of plan, shrewdness of thought, and beauty of verse.

To these excellences were added the richest stores of his fancy, in that which is certainly his most successful effort, "The Rape of the Lock." This exquisite work of art assumed its complete shape in the author's twenty-sixth year. It is the best of all mock-heroic

poems, and incomparably beyond those of Tassoni and Boileau, its Italian and French models. The sharpest wit, the keenest dissection of the follies of fashionable life, the finest grace of diction, and the softest flow of melody, come appropriately to adorn a tale in which we learn how a fine gentleman stole a lock of a lady's hair. And the gay mockery of human life and action is interwoven, in the fantastic freaks of the benignant sylphs and malevolent gnomes, with a parody, not less pleasant, of the supernatural inventions by which serious poetry has been wont to attempt the elevating of reality into the sphere of the ideal.

In the "Epistle of Eloisa to Abelard," and the "Elegy on an Unfortunate Lady," Pope attempted the pathetic, not altogether in vain, reaching in some passages a wonderful depth of emotion; and "The Messiah," smooth and highly elaborated, is agreeable as showing that the kindly and generous feeling which his other poems had often betrayed, was not unattended by more sacred thoughts and aspirations.

The last achievement of those, the poet's best years, was his Translation of Homer. The *Iliad* was entirely his own: of the *Odyssey* he translated only a half; the remainder being performed by Fenton and Broome, small poets of the day. Elegant, pointed, and musical; unfaithful to many of the most poetical passages of the original; and misrepresenting still more the natural and simple majesty of manner which the ancient poet never lost: the *Iliad* of Pope assuredly did not merit the extravagant admiration which it generally received in his own day. Yet, if we could forget Homer, we might not unreasonably be proud of it. It is an excellent poem, one of the best in the English language.

Among the poet's later works, were his *Satires* and *Epistles*; which are imitations and alterations of Horace, and extremely good in the Horatian fashion. In the "*Dunciad*," he threw away an infinity of invention and wit, and showed a discreditable bitterness of temper, in satirizing obscure writers, who would have been forgotten but for his naming of them, and whose weak points he was too angry to discern clearly. Indeed it is a curious fact in the history of this singular work, that, on being re-cast, it changed the name of its hero without changing anything material in the description of him. Theobald, a dull man, with a good deal of antiquarian knowledge, who had offended Pope by publishing a better edition of Shakspeare than his own, was displaced to make room for Cibber, the airy fop of coffee-houses and theatrical green-rooms. Yet, if satire were the highest kind of poetry, it is questionable whether the *Dunciad*, with all its faults, would not entitle Pope to be called

the greatest of poets. Amidst all other occupations, however, the most remarkable production of those declining years was the "Essay on Man," a work which contains much of exquisite poetry and finely solemn thought; but which, designedly didactic, cannot but be censured as conveying false instruction, because failing to communicate the highest portion of the truth. It seeks to reconcile, on the principles of human reason, those anomalies and contradictions of mortal life, for which no just solution can be found unless that which is revealed by the religion of Christianity.

The "Essay on Man" abounds, more than any other of Pope's compositions, in those striking passages, which, by their mingled felicities of fancy, good-sense, and music, and (above all) by their extraordinary terseness of diction, have gained a place in the memory of every one. No writer of our tongue, except Shakspeare alone, has furnished so many such. They guarantee his immortality so securely, and are almost always so exquisite, that one cannot without reluctance acquiesce in those objections to the artificial scope of his poetry in the mass, which a just sense of the functions of the art compels us to entertain as unanswerable.\*

\* ALEXANDER POPE.

I. FROM "WINDSOR FOREST."

The groves of Eden, vanish'd now so long,  
Live in description, and look green in song.  
These, were my breast inspired with equal flame,  
Like them in beauty, should be like in fame.  
Here hills and vales, the woodland and the plain,  
Here earth and water seem to strive again;  
Not chaos-like together crush'd and bruised,  
But, as the world, harmoniously confused;  
Where order in variety we see,  
And where, though all things differ, all agree.  
Here waving groves a chequer'd scene display,  
And part admit and part exclude the day:  
There, interspersed in lawns and opening glades,  
Thin trees arise that shun each other's shades.  
Here in full light the russet plains extend;  
There, wrapp'd in clouds, the blueish hills ascend.  
Even the wild heath displays her purple dies;  
And 'midst the desert fruitful fields arise,  
That, crown'd with tufted trees and springing corn,  
Like verdant isles the sable waste adorn.

II. FROM "THE RAPE OF THE LOCK."

*Description of Belinda, the Heroine.*

Not with more glories, in the ethereal plain,  
The sun first rises o'er the purpled main,

## PROSE LITERATURE.

4. Of the Theological Writings of Queen Anne's time, there are few on which we are tempted to linger. Bishop Atterbury's controversial eloquence is forgotten; while, without eloquence, and

Than, issuing forth, the rival of his beams  
Launch'd on the bosom of the silver Thames.  
Fair nymphs and well-dress'd youths around her shone;  
But every eye was fix'd on her alone.  
On her white breast a sparkling cross she wore,  
Which Jews might kiss and infidels adore.  
Her lively looks a sprightly mind disclose,  
Quick as her eyes, and as unfix'd as those:  
Favours to none, to all she smiles extends:  
Oft she rejects, but never once offends.  
Bright as the sun, her eyes the gazers strike;  
And, like the sun, they shine on all alike.  
Yet graceful ease, and sweetness void of pride,  
Might hide her faults, if belles had faults to hide.  
If to her share some female errors fall,  
Look on her face, and you'll forget them all.

## III. FROM THE "ELEGY ON AN UNFORTUNATE LADY."

What beck'ning ghost, along the moonlight shade,  
Invites my steps, and points to yonder glade?  
'Tis she!—But why that bleeding bosom gored?  
Why dimly gleams the visionary sword?  
Oh, ever beauteous, ever friendly! tell,  
Is it, in heaven, a crime to love too well?  
To bear too tender or too firm a heart?  
To act a Roman's or a lover's part?  
Is there no bright reversion in the sky,  
For those who greatly think or bravely die?

\* \* \* \*

So peaceful rests, without a stone, a name,  
What once had beauty, titles, wealth, and fame.  
How loved, how honour'd once, avails thee not;  
To whom related, or by whom begot:  
A heap of dust alone remains of thee:  
'Tis all thou art, and all the proud shall be!

Poets themselves must fall, like those they sung  
Deaf the praised ear, and mute the tuneful tongue.  
Even he, whose soul now melts in mournful lays,  
Shall shortly want the generous tear he pays.  
Then from his closing eyes thy form shall part,  
And the last pang shall tear thee from his heart;  
Life's idle business at one gasp be o'er,  
The muse forgot, and thou beloved no more!



with no distinguished power of thought, a devout spirit and doctrinal accuracy have preserved the works of Matthew Henry. Laymen furnished some religious works, such as Addison's treatise *On the Evidences of Christianity*, a kind of writings required as an antidote to others of evil tendency. The deepest thinker *b. 1675.* } of the day on such questions was Samuel Clarke, a singularly acute metaphysician, whose argument to prove *a priori* the existence of the Supreme Being introduces us to the Philosophical Writings of that argumentative generation. None of these holds so prominent a place in the history of philosophy *d. 1729.* } as the speculations of Bishop Berkeley, a writer whose style has a quiet refinement that is exceedingly delightful; while his subtlety of thought has very seldom been equalled. The philosophical Idealism of this pious and philanthropic man exercised, afterwards, much influence on the course of metaphysical inquiry; and, in several quarters, as in his "*Theory of Vision*," he has given us masterpieces of psychological analysis. Lord Shaftesbury's brilliant but indistinct treatises have similarly been the germ of not a few discussions in ethics. His style exhibits a mixture,

#### IV. FROM "THE DUNCIAD."

*Part of the Hero's Invocation to his Guardian Spirit.*

Then he: Great Tamer of all human art!  
 First in my care, and ever at my heart!  
 Dulness! whose good old cause I yet defend;  
 With whom my Muse began, with whom shall end!  
 Oh thou! of business the directing soul,  
 To this our head like bias to the bowl,  
 Which, as more ponderous, made its aim more true,  
 Obliquely waddling to the mark in view;  
 Oh! ever gracious to perplex'd mankind,  
 Still spread a healing mist before the mind!  
 And, lest we err by wit's wild dancing light,  
 Secure us kindly in our native Night:  
 Or, if to wit a coxcomb make pretence,  
 Guard the sure barrier between that and sense;  
 Or quite unravel all the reasoning thread,  
 And hang some curious cobweb in its stead!

As, forced from wind-guns, lead itself can fly,  
 And ponderous slugs cut swiftly through the sky;  
 As clocks to weight their nimble motion owe,  
 The wheels above urged by the load below;  
 Me emptiness and dulness could inspire,  
 And were my elasticity and fire.

Some demon stole my pen, (forgive the offence!)  
 And once betrayed me into common sense:  
 Else all my prose and verse were much the same;  
 This prose on stilts; that, poetry fall'n lame.

very odd though very natural, of refined and pleasing animation with affected novelties and other whimsicalities of diction. Lord Bolingbroke, once famous as a writer, is now justly forgotten, unless for having taught Pope some of the errors that deform his "Essay on Man." He wrote with great liveliness, and with equal shallowness of thought and of knowledge. His political speculations are admittedly no better than they might have been expected to be from the inconsistent course of his public life: and his attacks on religion are among the feeblest that have ever been directed against it.

5. But we are more accustomed to judge of the Prose Literature of that time by works of a more popular cast, some of them indeed being in their design merely things of their day, which are remembered through their force of language or ingenuity of invention.

b. 1661. } Daniel Defoe is the first person who, in our literary history,  
d. 1731. } deserves to be named as a good newspaper-writer. Some of the undertakings of his busy, contentious, and unfortunate life were of this sort: he wrote also a large number of political pamphlets: but he is now remembered only, and is not likely soon to be forgotten, on account of one of his many Novels. Every one feels the unostentatious aptness of invention, the practical good-sense, and the circumstantial plainness making everything so plausible, which are characteristics of "Robinson Crusoe." The strong appearance of reality is nowhere better produced than in some pieces where he professes to be relating historical facts; as in his "Memoirs of a Cavalier." Similar merits abound so much in his other fictions, that one cannot but regret his constant selection of vicious characters and lawless adventures as the objects of his descriptions. He is very far from being an immoral writer: but most of his scenes are such as we cannot be benefited by contemplating. Were it not for this serious drawback, several of his stories, depicting ordinary life with extraordinary vigour and originality, and inspired by a never-failing sympathy for the interests and feelings of the mass of the people, might deserve higher honour than the writings of his more refined and dignified contemporaries. Nor is the author's idiomatic English style the smallest of his merits.

b. 1667. } Among Swift's prose writings, there is none that is not a  
d. 1744. } masterpiece of bare, strong, Saxon English; and there is none, perhaps, that is quite destitute either of his keen wit or of his ferocious ill-nature. He, one of our shrewdest observers and best writers, possesses a celebrity which can never be entirely extinguished; but which, through his moral perversities, is not much more enviable than the notoriety a man would obtain by being exposed on the pillory. His works which are still read are a strange

kind of Satirical Romances. These are most pungent, doubtless, when, as in *Gulliver's Travels*, human nature is his victim: but he makes them hardly less amusing when he ridicules forgotten literary controversies in the *Battle of the Books*, commemorating the dispute in which we saw Temple taking part; when he treats church-disputes, in the *Tale of a Tub*, in a manner noway clerical; or when he jeers at Burnet, a shrewd and useful historian, in the *Memoirs of P. P. Clerk of the Parish*. His style deserves so much attention from the student, that it must here be very fully exemplified. Nor can its character be thoroughly understood unless we scrutinize it in its most familiar shape, as well as in the form it wears in his more elaborate compositions.\*

\* JONATHAN SWIFT.

I. *From the Dedication of "A Tale of a Tub."*

[The Satire, written about 1700, is dedicated to Posterity, figured as a Prince not come to years of discretion. His Governor or Tutor is Time, who will teach him what to think of authors and their works. Besides making half-sneering allusions to the greatest poet and the greatest scholar of the day, the satirist describes, with an irony not to be mistaken by any one, some of the small writers who have not found a place in our text. Yet fame has its kinds as well as its degrees. Rymer, a bad poet and worse critic, is respected by historical students as the editor of the "*Fœdera*:" and the metrical version of the Psalms has made the name of Tate familiar to many thousands of persons, who never heard of Dean Swift.]

Sir, I here present your Highness with the fruits of a very few leisure hours, stolen from the short intervals of a world of business, and of an employment quite alien from such amusements as this; the poor production of that refuse of time which has lain heavy upon my hands, during a long prorogation of parliament, a great dearth of foreign news, and a tedious fit of rainy weather. For which and other reasons it cannot choose extremely to deserve such a patronage as that of your Highness, whose numberless virtues, in so few years, make the world look upon you as the future example to all princes. For, although your Highness is hardly got clear of infancy, yet has the universal learned world already resolved upon appealing to your future dictates with the lowest and most resigned submission; fate having decreed you sole arbiter of the productions of human wit, in this polite and most accomplished age. Methinks the number of appellants were enough to shock and startle any judge, of a genius less unlimited than yours. But, in order to prevent such glorious trials, the person, it seems, to whose care the education of your Highness is committed, has resolved, I am told, to keep you in almost an universal ignorance of our studies, which it is your inherent birthright to inspect.

It is amazing to me that this person should have assurance, in the face of the sun, to go about persuading your Highness, that our age is almost wholly illiterate, and has hardly produced one writer upon any subject. I know very well, that, when your Highness shall come to riper years and have gone through the learning of antiquity, you will be too curious to neglect

None of the serious writings of the generation contains so much of really good criticism, as the burlesque *Memoirs of Martinus*

inquiring into the authors of the very age before you. And to think that this Insolent, in the account he is preparing for your view, designs to reduce them to a number so insignificant as I am ashamed to mention : it moves my zeal and my spleen for the honour and interest of our vast flourishing body, as well as of myself, for whom I know by long experience he has professed and still continues a peculiar malice.

It is not unlikely, that, when your Highness will one day peruse what I am now writing, you may be ready to expostulate with your Governor upon the credit of what I here affirm, and command him to show you some of our productions. To which he will answer, (for I am well informed of his designs,) by asking your Highness, "Where they are?" and, "What is become of them?" and pretend it a demonstration that there never were any, because they are not then to be found. Not to be found! Who has mislaid them?

\* \* \* It were endless to recount the several methods of tyranny and destruction which your governor is pleased to practise on this occasion. His inveterate malice is such to the writings of our age, that, of several thousands produced yearly from this renowned city, before the next revolution of the sun there is not one to be heard of: unhappy infants! many of them barbarously destroyed before they have so much as learned their mother-tongue to beg for pity! \* \* \*

The concern I have most at heart, is for our corporation of poets; from whom I am preparing a petition to your Highness, to be subscribed with the names of one hundred and thirty-six of the first-rate; but whose immortal productions are never likely to reach your eyes, though each of them is now a humble and earnest appellant for the laurel, and has large comely volumes ready to show for a support to his pretensions. The never-dying works of these illustrious persons, your governor, Sir, has devoted to unavoidable death; and your Highness is to be made believe, that our age has never arrived at the honour to produce one single poet.

We confess Immortality to be a great and powerful goddess: but in vain we offer up to her our devotions and our sacrifices, if your Highness's governor, who has usurped the priesthood, must, by an unparalleled ambition and avarice, wholly intercept and devour them.

\* \* \* \* \*

I profess to your Highness, in the integrity of my heart, that what I am going to say is literally true this minute I am writing. What revolutions may happen before it shall be ready for your perusal, I can by no means warrant: however, I beg you to accept it, as a specimen of our learning, our politeness, and our wit. I do therefore affirm, upon the word of a sincere man, that there is now actually in being a certain poet called John Dryden, whose translation of Virgil was lately printed in a large folio, well bound, and, if diligent search were made, for aught I know, is yet to be seen. There is another, called Nahum Tate, who is ready to make oath that he has caused many reams of verse to be published, whereof both himself and his bookseller (if lawfully required) can still produce authentic copies; and therefore wonders, why the world is pleased to make such a secret of it. There is a third, known by the name of Tom D'Urfey, a poet of a vast comprehension, and universal genius, and most profound learning. There are also one



Scriblerus, with its appendixes : the work is also abundant in the most biting strokes of wit. The authorship of it was shared, in proportions now uncertain, between Swift, Pope, and Arbuthnot. The last of these was a Scotsman, who practised physic in London. He is supposed to have been the sole author of the whimsical national satire called *The History of John Bull*, the best thing, taken as a whole, which the day produced in that class. The Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montague claim merely a passing notice.

6. Of all the popular writers, however, that adorned the reigns of Queen Anne and her successor, those whose influence, both on their own age and on posterity, has been at once greatest and most salutary, are the Essayists. Among these, Joseph Addison and Richard Steele were so pre-eminently distinguished, that no injustice would be done were we to forget their occasional assistants, such as Budgell, Tickell, Hughes, and Eusden.

The *Tatler*, begun in Ireland by Steele, (aided at first by Swift, and afterwards by Addison,) was continued, three times a-week, from April 1709, to January 1711. The *Spectator*, in which Addison speedily took the lead, commenced in March 1711, and was stopped after having gone on every week-day till December 1712.

Mr Rymer, and one Mr Dennis, most profound critics. There is a person styled Doctor Bentley, who has written nearly a thousand pages of immense erudition, giving a full and true account of a certain squabble, of wonderful importance, between himself and a bookseller.

## II. *A Letter.*

Sir, You stole in and out of town without seeing either the ladies or me ; which was very ungratefully done, considering the obligations you have to us for lodging and dieting with you so long. Why did you not call in a morning at the Deanery ? Besides, we reckon for certain that you came to stay a month or two, as you told us you intended. I hear you were so kind as to be at Laracor, where I hope you planted something : and I intend to be down after Christmas, where you must continue a week. As for your plan, it is very pretty, too pretty for the use I intend to make of Laracor. All I would desire is, what I mention in the paper I left you, except a walk down to the canal. I suppose your project would cost me ten pounds and a constant gardener. Pray come to town, and stay some time, and repay yourself some of your dinners. I wonder how a mischief you came to miss us. Why did you not set out a Monday, like a true country parson ? Besides, you lay a load on us, in saying one chief end of your journey was to see us : but I suppose there might be another motive, and you are like the man that died of love and the cholic. Let us know whether you are more or less monkish, how long you found yourself better by our company, and how long before you recovered the charges we put you to. The ladies assure you of their hearty services ; and I am, with great truth and sincerity, Your most faithful humble servant, J. Swift.



The Guardian, becoming political, lived only through a part of the next year ; and, in the last six months of 1714, papers published three times a-week made up the eighth and last volume of the Spectator.

*b.* 1676. } Steele, an irregular thinker as well as an irregular liver,  
*d.* 1729. } has had his merits, especially in the Spectator, somewhat unfairly over-clouded by the fame of his coadjutor. Much inferior in style, in refinement both of sentiment and of reflection, and in the higher kinds of information, he yet knew both mankind and the world, and had a dramatic force, as well as an originality of humour, by which the series of papers has profited largely. In not a few instances, such as the description of the Spectator's Club, we can trace to him the invention of striking outlines, which his friend afterwards filled up, imparting to them a new charm by his own characteristic gracefulness of colouring and placid cheerfulness of feeling \*

The extraordinary popularity of those periodicals, especially the Spectator, was creditable to the reading persons of the community,

\* SIR RICHARD STEELE.

*From the Description of the Spectator's Club: in No. 2.*

The first of our society is a gentleman of Worcestershire, of an ancient descent, a baronet, his name Sir Roger De Coverley. His great grandfather was inventor of that famous country dance which is called after him. All who know that shire, are very well acquainted with the parts and merits of Sir Roger. He is a gentleman that is very singular in his behaviour : but his singularities proceed from his good sense, and are contradictions to the manners of the world, only as he thinks the world is in the wrong. However, this humour creates him no enemies ; for he does nothing with sourness or obstinacy : and his being unconfined to modes and forms, makes him but the readier and more capable to please and oblige all who know him. It is said he keeps himself a bachelor by reason he was crossed in love by a perverse beautiful widow of the next county to him. Before that disappointment Sir Roger was what you call a fine gentleman. But, being ill-used by the widow, he was very serious for a year and a half : and though, his temper being naturally jovial, he at last got over it, he grew careless of himself, and never dressed afterwards. He continues to wear a coat and doublet of the same cut that were in fashion at the time of his repulse ; which, in his merry humours he tells us, has been in and out twelve times since he first wore it. He is now in his fifty-sixth year, cheerful, gay, and hearty : keeps a good house both in town and country ; a great lover of mankind : but there is such a mirthful cast in his behaviour, that he is rather beloved than esteemed. His tenants grow rich ; his servants look satisfied ; all the young women profess love to him ; and all the young men are glad of his company. When he comes into a house he calls the servants by their names, and talks all the way up stairs to a visit. I must not omit, that Sir Roger is a justice of the quorum ; that he fills the chair at a quarter-session with great abilities, and three months ago gained universal applause by explaining a passage in the game act.

then very much fewer than now. But it was a tribute to extraordinary merit, and to a soundness of judgment which appreciated correctly, how far, and by what means, the attempt to elevate and purify the public taste and sentiment could safely be ventured on. The idea of the projectors was that of adopting the form of those flying sheets, which had hitherto been hardly ever anything better than indifferent little newspapers; of discarding from their pages all that could nourish party-spirit, or provoke party-prejudice; of making them the vehicle of judicious teaching in morals, manners, and literary criticism; and of paying homage, now and then, to truths yet more sacred.

If the design was not quite that of founding a literature for the people, it combined at least the two aims, of widening the circle of persons who might be made to take an interest in literary affairs, and of raising the standard both of thinking and of taste for those who had already acquired the habit of reading. To the mere literary lounge, their comic sketches of society, their whimsical autobiographies, their exposures of social weaknesses and follies, in petitions, letters, or skilful allegories, offered themselves as supplying the place of the worn-out comic stage, and as supplying that place not only purely but instructively. It might indeed be said, with yet greater aptness, that the *Spectator* offered itself also to the novel-reader. It is full of little novels, or of fragments of such: if we take consecutively the scattered sketches, telling the history of Sir Roger De Coverley, we shall find them to constitute a novel as properly as any work openly bearing the name. For those who were something more than idlers, there were held out objects much higher; objects of contemplation which lead us to think better of the age, than we could if we had only Pope or Swift to look to as its expositors. Of this more ambitious and serious character are many single papers *b. 1672.* } of Addison's, and several groups of papers in each of which *d. 1719.* } he carried out a systematic train of thought. We might find such, especially, throughout the last volume of the *Spectator*. But it is enough to cite, of his religious meditations, the essays on the Immortality of the Soul; and to point out a few where he expatiates in another walk of reflection. His papers on the Pleasures of the Imagination are highly meritorious as sinking a shaft in unbroken ground; and his criticisms on Milton, if not very abstruse, are full of taste and sensibility, and were the earliest public recognition of the greatness of that great poet. \*

\* JOSEPH ADDISON.

I. *A Ghost Story: from the Spectator; No. 110.*

At a little distance from Sir Roger's house, among the ruins of an old abbey,

there is a long walk of aged elms; which are shot up so very high, that, when one passes under them, the rooks and crows that rest on the tops of them seem to be cawing in another region. I am very much delighted with this sort of noise; which I consider as a kind of natural prayer to that Being who supplies the wants of his whole creation, and who, in the beautiful language of the Psalms, feedeth the young ravens that call upon him.

I like this retirement the better, because of an ill report it lies under of being haunted; for which reason (as I have been told in the family) no living creature ever walks in it besides the chaplain. My good friend the butler desired me, with a very grave face, not to venture myself in it after sunset; for that one of the footmen had been almost frightened out of his wits, by a spirit that appeared to him in the shape of a black horse without a head: to which he added, that about a month ago one of the maids, coming home late that way with a pail of milk upon her head, heard such a rustling among the bushes that she let it fall.

I was taking a walk in this place last night between the hours of nine and ten; and could not but fancy it one of the most proper scenes in the world for a ghost to appear in. The ruins of the abbey are scattered up and down on every side, and half covered with ivy and elder-bushes, the harbours of several solitary birds which seldom make their appearance till the dusk of the evening. The place was formerly a churchyard, and has still several marks in it of graves and burying-places. There is such an echo among the old ruins and vaults, that, if you stamp but a little louder than ordinary, you hear the sound repeated. At the same time the walk of elms, with the croaking of the ravens which from time to time are heard from the tops of them, looks exceedingly solemn and venerable. These objects naturally raise seriousness and attention; and, when night heightens the awfulness of the place, and pours out her supernumerary horrors upon everything in it, I do not at all wonder that weak minds fill it with spectres and apparitions.

In this solitude, where the dusk of the evening conspired with so many other occasions of terror, I observed a cow grazing not far from me, which an imagination that was apt to startle might easily have construed into a black horse without a head; and I daresay the poor footman lost his wits upon some such trivial occasion.

II. *Reflections: from the Essays "On the Pleasures of the Imagination;" Spectator, Nos. 411-421.*

The Supreme Author of our being has made everything that is beautiful in all objects pleasant, or rather has made so many objects appear beautiful, that He might render the whole creation more gay and delightful. He has given almost everything about us the power of raising an agreeable idea in the imagination; so that it is impossible for us to behold His works with coldness or indifference, and to survey so many beauties without a secret satisfaction and complacency.

We are everywhere entertained with pleasing shows and apparitions; we discover imaginary glories in the heavens and on the earth, and see some of this visionary beauty poured out upon the whole creation: but what a rough unsightly sketch of Nature should we be entertained with, did all her colouring disappear, and the several distinctions of light and shade vanish! In short, our souls are at present delightfully lost and bewildered in a pleasing

delusion : and we walk about like the enchanted hero in a romance, who sees beautiful castles, woods, and meadows, and at the same time hears the warbling of birds and the purling of streams ; but, upon the finishing of some secret spell, the fantastic scene breaks up, and the disconsolate knight finds himself on a barren heath or in a solitary desert. It is not improbable that something like this may be the state of the soul after its first separation, in respect of the images it will receive from matter.

\* \* \* \* \*

As the writers in poetry and fiction borrow their several materials from outward objects, and join them together at their own pleasure, there are others who are obliged to follow nature more closely, and to take entire scenes out of her. Such are historians, natural philosophers, travellers, geographers ; and, in a word, all who describe visible objects of a real existence.

Among this set of writers, there are none who more gratify and enlarge the imagination than the authors of the new philosophy ; whether we consider their theories of the earth or heavens, the discoveries they have made by glasses, or any other of their contemplations on nature. We are not a little pleased to find every green leaf swarm with millions of animals, that at their largest growth are not visible to the naked eye. There is something very engaging to the fancy, as well as to our reason, in the treatises of metals, minerals, plants, and meteors. But, when we survey the whole earth at once, and the several planets that lie within its neighbourhood, we are filled with a pleasing astonishment, to see so many worlds hanging one above another, and sliding round their axles in such an amazing pomp and solemnity. If, after this, we contemplate those wild fields of ether, that reach in height as far as from Saturn to the fixed stars, and run abroad almost to an infinitude, our imagination finds its capacity filled with so immense a prospect, and puts itself upon the stretch to comprehend it. But, if we yet rise higher, and consider the fixed stars as so many vast oceans of flame, that are each of them attended with a different set of planets ; and still discover new firmaments and new lights that are sunk farther in those unfathomable depths of ether, so as not to be seen by the strongest of our telescopes : we are lost in such a labyrinth of suns and worlds, and confounded with the immensity and magnificence of nature.

## CHAPTER XI.

## THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

## SECTION THIRD : THE LITERATURE OF THE SECOND GENERATION.

A. D. 1727—A. D. 1760.

GEORGE II. :—1727—1760.

PROSE. 1. Theology—Warburton—Bishop Butler's Analogy—Watts and Doddridge—Philosophy—Butler's Ethical System—The Metaphysics of David Hume—Jonathan Edwards—Franklin.—2. Miscellaneous Prose—Minor Writers—New Series of Periodical Essays—Magazines and Reviews.—3. Samuel Johnson—His Life—His Literary Character.—4. Johnson's Works.—5. The Novelists—Their Moral Faultiness.—POETRY. 6. The Drama—Non-Dramatic Poetry—Rise in Poetical Tone—Didactic Poems—Johnson—Young—Akenside—Narrative and Descriptive Poems—Thomson's Seasons.—7. Poetical Taste of the Public—Lyrical Poems of Gray and Collins.

## PROSE LITERATURE.

1. AMONG the Theological Writers who may be assigned to the reign of George the Second, the most widely famous in his day, though by no means the most meritorious, was the arrogant and pugnacious Bishop Warburton. His best-known work, "The Divine Legation of Moses," is admitted to be, notwithstanding its curious variety of illustration, worthless in regard to its main design. Greater value is attributed to his defence of church-establishments, and his vindications of the Christian faith against infidelity. The latter task, however, was b. 1692.  
d. 1752. performed with incomparably greater ability, in Bishop Butler's "Analogy of Religion, Natural and Revealed, to the Constitution and Course of Nature." This admirable treatise, one of the most exact pieces of reasoning in any language, is intended to show, that all objections which can be urged, either against the Religion of Nature or against that of Christianity, are equally valid in disproof of truths which are universally believed, and which regulate the whole tenor of human action. No writer



can be further than Butler from being either eloquent or elegant : and his incessant tide of close reasoning calls for very severe exertion, on the part of those who would be borne along on the stream with intelligent attention. His bareness and clumsiness of style are proofs of that sterling and extraordinary force of thought, which impresses us so deeply without any extraneous assistance.

The works in Practical Theology were increasingly numerous ; and some of them, such as the eloquent sermons of Sherlock, retain a place in literary history. Hervey's writings do not deserve that honour for any thing except their goodness of intention. But there is much literary merit in those of the gently pious Watts, and still more in those of the fervidly devout Doddridge. Nor were these two the only men who supported the reputation of the Nonconformists. Leland did good service by his dissections of deistical writers ; and Lardner's works are still of very high worth, as stores both of learning and of thought.

In the Church of England, and out of it, there was a waxing zeal, and a more cordial recognition of the importance of religion : and much good was done, through seeming separation, by the increased prosperity of the Dissenters, and the formation of the two bodies of Methodists. These were things which gradually leavened much of the literature of the times.

Meanwhile Philosophy had distinguished votaries, with Butler at their head. The high-toned Ethical System of this excellent thinker has received full justice from most of our recent speculators on the theory of morals. Much inferior in power as well as clearness, but still useful, in the same field, was Hutcheson, an Irishman, who taught in Glasgow, and has sometimes been called the founder of the Scottish school of mental science. He contributed also to the Theory of Art ; in which, and in that of Language, much ingenuity was shown by Harris. To that generation belongs Hartley's attempt to resolve all mental phenomena into the association of ideas ; a view which, though almost always resisted in Scotland, has found in England many distinguished supporters.

b. 1711. } In that earlier portion of his life, too, David Hume pub-  
d. 1776. } lished his Philosophical Works ; works which must be allowed, even by those who dissent most strenuously from their results, to have constituted an epoch and turning point in the history of Metaphysics. We must not be alarmed, by the religious infidelity of this celebrated man, into a forgetfulness of the value which belongs to his metaphysical speculations, wrong as his opinions here also will be admitted to have been. In accepting the principles of philosophy, which had been received by the metaphy-

sicians of our country, and showing that these led to no conclusion but universal doubt, he served philosophy as the architect serves the owner of a house when he lays bare a flaw in its foundations. The exposure could not have been more thoroughly made, than in his clear, calm, thoughtful fragments of acute objection. Succeeding thinkers have accepted the challenge; and, amidst all differences of opinion as to the success of the methods by which the attack has been met, it may at least be asserted safely, that, but for Hume, philosophy would have wanted, not only the subtle speculations of Kant, but the more modest and cautious systems of Reid and the rest of the Scottish school.

Before quitting the theological and philosophical literature of this generation, we must record, as belonging to it, the first remarkable name which America contributed to the history of English letters. Of Jonathan Edwards, it was said by Mackintosh, *b.* 1703. } that "his power of subtile argument was perhaps un-  
*d.* 1758. } matched, certainly unsurpassed among men." The religious value possessed by the writings of this excellent man, is far from being their only claim on our attention. Some of them hold a place, which they are not likely to lose, in the annals of mental philosophy. Perhaps no process of metaphysical and psychological reasoning has ever had a wider or more commanding influence, than his celebrated treatise *On the Will*; and his works *On Religious Affections*, and *On the Nature of Virtue*, entitle him to be enrolled with distinction among the cultivators of ethical science.

Along with him we may set down, in passing to a different department, the name of another of the great men who have arisen among our Transatlantic kinsmen. Benjamin Franklin, though *b.* 1706. }  
*d.* 1790. } most famous in the history of his country and in that of physical science, might almost be ranked among the teachers of practical ethics; and, at any rate, his homely sagacity and vigour forbid his being forgotten among the miscellaneous writers of his time. His literary activity belongs chiefly to the period which we are now surveying.

2. The Miscellaneous Literature of this, the age of Johnson, cannot in any respect stand comparison with that which was headed by Addison.

We encounter a new group of Periodical Essays, which are but poor successors to the *Spectator*. First, commencing in 1750, came the "*Rambler*," written almost entirely by Johnson. It has little of liveliness besides the inapt name: its few attempts at humour are very heavy, and its sketches of character disappointingly meagre. But it is full of the author's finest vein of religious moralizing. It

was followed by the "Adventurer" of Hawkesworth, the best and earliest of Johnson's imitators, but not more than an imitator; by the "World," edited by Moore the dramatist, and more amusing, though without much substance; and by the *Connoisseur*, which is chiefly notable for containing several papers by the poet Cowper, the only links connecting him with the time we are now studying. The series was closed in 1758 by the "Idler" of Johnson.

Essays, Criticisms, and Imaginative Sketches, were now received into another class of periodicals, the *Magazines* and *Reviews*. These, though as yet neither very systematic nor exercising much influence, employed the talent, and assisted in furnishing the liveliness, of some of the best writers of the time. The "*Gentleman's Magazine*," which still survives, was enriched for years by the toil of Johnson: the *Monthly Review*, conducted ably by less famous writers, called forth, by its patronage of Whiggism and Dissent, the *Critical Review* to advocate Tory and High-Church principles; a task chiefly performed, with equal ability and vehemence, by Smollett, and sometimes assisted in by Johnson.

Throughout this generation, as in that before it, Historical Writing had hardly any merit beyond the industrious collection of materials. Almost the only exceptions were Hooke's spiritedly written *Roman History*, Middleton's *Life of Cicero*, and Jortin's *Life of Erasmus*.

We lose little by not learning the names of other minor writers, and passing to that of one who was the most industrious as well as the most celebrated among the professional authors of the eighteenth century.

b. 1709. } 3. Samuel Johnson, compelled by poverty to leave his  
d. 1784. } education at Oxford uncompleted, came to London in 1737, to seek the means of living. Thenceforth, unpatronized and long obscure, and failing in repeated attempts to extricate himself from a profession which is always more harassing and uncertain than any other, and was then peculiarly painful to a high-minded man, he laboured with dogged perseverance till, in the beginning of George the Third's reign, a pension enabled him to relax his efforts, and enjoy in his declining years the fame he had so hardly won.

Won it was not till, in his own desponding words, "most of those whom he wished to please had sunk into the grave, and he had little to fear or to hope from censure or from praise." Yet the celebrity which did at length surround him, in the generation after that which we are now surveying, was such as might have satiated the most grasping literary ambition; and the influence which his writings had was so vast, that it now makes us wonder, whether we look to their bulk, their topics, or their contents. That their reputation

was above their deserts, cannot and must not be denied. But they are the fruit of a singularly strong and original mind, working with imperfect knowledge and inadequate scope for activity : and the neglect to which they are now consigned does harm to those who are guilty of it ; because the literature of our time is generally deficient in many of the excellences he has, both of thought and of expression.

His language is unquestionably superior to his matter. Ridiculous as his antithetically balanced pomp of words always becomes in weaker hands, and sometimes in his own, he has striking force and aptness of diction, especially when his feelings are so highly wrought as to kindle his sluggish imagination into the intensely smouldering heat which it often assumes. Many of his sentences roll in on the ear like the sound of the distant sea ; and the thoughts they convey impress us so vividly, that we are slow to scrutinize their quality. His merit as a thinker lies almost entirely in two departments, morals and criticism. In the former he has little originality of general principles, but much in special views, with very great clearness, sagacity, and elevation. In the latter he is weak when he examines details, and in all points dependent on fine susceptibility : but in his mastery of general laws he is much in advance of his age ; and his theoretical opinions, in regard to many questions of the poetical art, are as sound as any that could be formed by a man whose natural sense of poetical beauty was very far from being keen. Everywhere, however, he is inconsistent and unequal ; partly through gloominess and irritability of temper, aggravated by a life of disappointment and excessive toil ; and partly because he never was able to bring to ripeness in his mind any coherent system of opinions, even in regard to those questions on which he oftenest thought and wrote.\*

\* SAMUEL JOHNSON.

I. *From "Rasselas:" The Hermit tired of Solitude.*

The hermit set flesh and wine before them ; though he fed only upon fruits and water. His discourse was cheerful without levity, and pious without enthusiasm.

At last Imlac began thus : " I do not now wonder that your reputation is so far extended : we have heard at Cairo of your wisdom, and came hither to implore your direction for this young man and maiden in the Choice of Life."

" To him that lives well," answered the Hermit, " every form of life is good ; nor can I give any other rule for choice, than to remove from all apparent evil."

" He will remove most certainly from evil," said the prince, " who shall



4. The only great undertaking he engaged in was his Dictionary, which was his chief occupation for eight years. Highly honourable to the writer, in the circumstances in which it was produced, it is now worthless to the student of language, being very poor and incorrect in etymology, and unsatisfactory though acute in definition.

devote himself to that solitude which you have recommended by your example."

"I have indeed lived fifteen years in solitude," said the hermit, "but have no desire that my example should gain any imitators. In my youth I professed arms, and was raised by degrees to the highest military rank. I have traversed wide countries at the head of my troops, and seen many battles and sieges. At last, being disgusted by the preferments of a younger officer, and feeling that my vigour was beginning to decay, I resolved to close my life in peace, having found the world full of snares, discord, and misery. I had once escaped from the pursuit of the enemy by the shelter of this cavern, and therefore chose it for my final residence. I employed artificers to form it into chambers, and stored it with all that I was likely to want.

"For some time after my retreat, I rejoiced like a tempest-beaten sailor at his entrance into the harbour, being delighted with the sudden change of the noise and hurry of war to stillness and repose. When the pleasure of novelty went away, I employed my hours in examining the plants which grew in the valley, and the minerals which I collected from the rocks. But that inquiry is now grown tasteless and irksome. I have been for some time unsettled and distracted: my mind is disturbed with a thousand perplexities of doubt and vanities of imagination, which hourly prevail upon me, because I have no opportunities of relaxation or diversion. I am sometimes ashamed to think, that I could not secure myself from vice, but by retiring from the exercise of virtue; and begin to suspect that I was rather impelled by resentment, than led by devotion, into solitude. My fancy riots in scenes of folly; and I lament that I have lost so much and have gained so little. In solitude, if I escape the example of bad men, I want likewise the counsel and conversation of the good. I have been long comparing the evils with the advantages of society, and resolve to return into the world to-morrow. The life of a solitary man will be certainly miserable, but not certainly devout."

They heard his resolution with surprise, but, after a short pause, offered to conduct him to Cairo. He dug up a considerable treasure which he had hid among the rocks, and accompanied them to the city; on which, as he approached it, he gazed with rapture.

## II. *From the "Rambler;" No. 2: Man's Propensity to Look to the Future.*

That the mind of man is never satisfied with the objects immediately before it, but is always breaking away from the present moment, and losing itself in schemes of future felicity; and that we forget the proper use of the time now in our power, to provide for the enjoyment of that which perhaps may never be granted us, has been frequently remarked: and, as this practice is a commodious subject of raillery to the gay, and of declamation to the serious, it has been ridiculed with all the pleasantry of wit, and exaggerated with all the amplifications of rhetoric.

This quality, of looking forward into futurity, seems the unavoidable con-



His other Prose Writings were short; and a huge mass of them, in the shape of prefaces, essays, criticisms, and controversial tracts, is lost in periodicals or otherwise forgotten. His Poems are of Pope's school, and would hardly have preserved his name. Yet his "London," published at the same time with a satire of Pope's, was warmly and deservedly admired by that jealous poet: and "The Vanity of Human Wishes," while it contains some flashes of poetry, is moving for the deep and thoughtful melancholy of its tone. The "Rambler" is perhaps more characteristic, both for merit and defect, than any of his other works; unless we choose rather to derive our knowledge of him from "Rasselas," a novel in form but in little else. After his release from penury came his edition of Shakespeare, of which it is small praise to say that it is not so bad as Pope's: but the famous Preface to it is highly valuable, not for its eloquence only, but for many of its speculations on the theory of dramatic poetry. It is an extraordinary mixture of narrow and erroneous trifling, with true and novel opinions, clearly conceived, and stated with great vigour and vivacity of expression. Among the other

dition of a being, whose motions are gradual, and whose life is progressive. As his powers are limited, he must use means for the attainment of his ends, and intend first what he performs last: as, by continual advances from his first stage of existence, he is perpetually varying the horizon of his prospects, he must always discover new motives of action, new excitements of fear, and allurements of desire.

The end, therefore, which at present calls forth our efforts, will be found, when it is once gained, to be only one of the means to some remoter end. The natural flights of the human mind are not from pleasure to pleasure, but from hope to hope.

He that directs his steps to a certain point, must frequently turn his eyes to that place which he strives to reach: he that undergoes the fatigue of labour, must solace his weariness with the contemplation of its reward. In agriculture, one of the most simple and necessary employments, no man turns up the ground but because he thinks of the harvest; that harvest which blights may intercept, which inundations may sweep away, or which death or calamity may hinder him from reaping.

Yet, as few maxims are widely received or long retained but for some conformity with truth and nature, it must be confessed, that this caution against keeping our view too intent upon remote advantages, is not without its propriety or usefulness; though it may have been recited with too much levity, or enforced with too little distinction: for, not to speak of that vehemence of desire which presses through right and wrong to its gratification, or that anxious inquietude which is justly chargeable with distrust of Heaven, subjects too solemn for my present purpose; it frequently happens that, by indulging early the raptures of success, we forget the measures necessary to secure it, and suffer the imagination to riot in the fruition of some possible good, till the time of obtaining it has slipped away.

works of his later years, was the Tour to the Hebrides, which is one of the most pleasant and easy of his writings. Afterwards came his "Lives of the Poets," a series of biographies and criticisms, admirable beyond any of his compositions for its skill of narration; alternately enlightened and unsound in its critical principles; and frequently debased, as in the lives of Milton and Gray, by political prejudices and personal jealousies.

5. When we pass from Johnson to the Novelists of his time, we seem as if leaving the aisles of an august cathedral, to descend into the galleries of a productive but ill-ventilated mine. Around us clings a foul and heavy air, which youthful travellers in the realm of literature cannot safely breathe. We must emerge as speedily as possible to the light of day.

b. 1689. } The series of Novels began in 1741, with Richardson's  
d. 1761. } "Pamela," which was followed at long intervals by his "Clarissa Harlowe" and "Sir Charles Grandison." These have a virtuous aim, and err chiefly by the plainness with which they describe vice. Richardson gains, through his business-like minuteness of detail, an air of reality which is sometimes as strong as that of Defoe: and it is a pity that his tediousness, his unrelieved seriousness, and his over-wrought sentimentality, go so far towards disqualifying the reader from appreciating his extraordinary skill both in the invention of incidents and in the portraiture of character.

These qualities are united with greater knowledge of the world, pregnant wit, much power of thinking, and remarkable ease and  
b. 1707. } idiomatic strength of style, in the works of Fielding, whose  
d. 1757. } mastery in the art of fictitious narrative has never been excelled. But his living pictures of familiar life, the whimsical caricatures of Smollett, and the humorous fantasies of Sterne, are alike polluted by faults, of which the very smallest are the coarseness of language which they had inherited, and the unscrupulous bareness of licentious description in which they out-did Richardson. It is not merely that their standard of morality is low: they display indifference to the essential distinctions between right and wrong, in regard to some of the cardinal relations of society. The personages whom they represent to us, with praise or without blame, act in a way which is not merely unworthy of responsible moral agents, but disgraceful according to the most indulgent code that could be laid down to regulate the conduct of gentlemen.

The beginning of the next period (to which indeed some of Smollett's novels belong) will exhibit a gratifying improvement both of taste and morals, in the novels and similar writings of Goldsmith.

## POETICAL LITERATURE.

6. The Drama of the period now before us has very little literary importance. Johnson's one tragedy of "Irene" contains some fine blank verse: and the tragedies of Thomson are the undramatic effusions of a descriptive poet. The "George Barnwell" of Lillo and the "Gamester" of Moore are clever specimens of a mongrel kind of tragedy; which, adopting domestic incidents not easily raised into the poetical region proper to the drama, fortifies itself impreguably against poetry by couching its dialogue in prose instead of verse. The comedies and farces of the actors Garrick and Foote soon lost their value for the stage, and never had much for the literary student.

In Non-Dramatic Poetry we have to observe, not only the appearance of several men possessing distinguished genius, but also changes which indicated the formation of views in regard to the art, more just and comprehensive than those that had been prevalent in the preceding generation.

In the first place, neither personal sarcasm, nor the chronicle of the externals of polite society, was now held to be the task most worthy to receive the embellishments of didactic verse. The key-note of a higher strain was struck by Johnson, and repeated in the *Sat.* b. 1681. } ires of Young. This writer, afterwards, in his "Night-  
d. 1765. } Thoughts," produced a work, eloquent perhaps rather than poetical, dissertative where true poetry would have been imaginative, and studded with conceits as thickly as the metaphysical poems of the seventeenth century; but yet dealing in a fit spirit with the most sublime of all themes, and suggesting to meditative minds much of imagery and feeling as well as of religious reflection. Akin to it in not a few points, but with more force of imagination, was the train of gloomy scenes which appears in Blair's "Grave." In this poem we note the return of Scotland to the literary arena, into which she had for a long time sent no champions of great prowess. In Akenside's "Pleasures of Imagination," a vivid fancy,  
d. 1770. } a warm susceptibility of fine emotion, and an alluring pomp of language, are lavished on a series of pictures illustrating the feelings of beauty and sublimity. The mischief is, that the poet, theorizing and poetizing by turns, loses his hold of his readers more than other writers whose topics are less abstract. The philosophical thinker finds better teaching elsewhere; and the poetical student, unless he is also metaphysically inclined, has his enthusiasm chilled by the obtrusive dissertations.

It should next be remarked, that the more direct and effective forms of poetry came again into favour. The Scottish pastoral drama

of Ramsay need not be more than named: closer attention might be claimed for the spirited narrative of Falconer's "Shipwreck." But the most decisive instance of the growing insight into the true functions of poetry is furnished by the "Seasons" of Thomson, which appeared very soon after the completion of Pope's Homer. No poet, not Wordsworth himself, has ever been inspired more than Thomson was, by that love of external nature which is the prompter of poetic imagery; and none has felt, with more keenness and delicacy, those analogies between the mind and the things it looks on, which are the fountain of genuine poetic feeling. Many of his bits of scenery are more beautiful than any thing else of the sort in the whole compass of our literature. His faults are heavy: triteness of thought when he becomes argumentative; sentimental vulgarism when he aims at the dramatic; and a prevalent pomposity and pedantry of diction, which at once forestalled Johnson and surpassed him. His later work, "The Castle of Indolence," is hardly less poetical; while it is surprisingly free from his besetting sins. It is, too, the only very strong symptom which the age manifested, of sympathy with the older English poets.\*

\* JAMES THOMSON.

A SUMMER DAWN, FROM THE SEASONS.

And soon, observant of approaching day,  
 The meek-ey'd Morn appears, mother of dews,  
 At first faint-gleaming in the dappled east;  
 Till far o'er ether spreads the widening glow,  
 And, from before the lustre of her face,  
 White break the clouds away.—With quicken'd step  
 Brown Night retires. Young Day pours in apace,  
 And opens all the lawn prospect wide.  
 The dripping rocks, the mountain's misty top,  
 Swell on the sight, and brighten with the dawn.  
 Blue, through the dusk, the smoky currents shine:  
 And from the bladed field the fearful hare  
 Limp, awkward; while along the forest-glade  
 The wild deer trip, and often turning gaze  
 At early passenger. Music awakes,  
 The native voice of undissembled joy:  
 And thick around the woodland hymns arise.  
 Roused by the cock, the soon-clad shepherd leaves  
 His mossy cottage, where with peace he dwells  
 And from the crowded fold in order drives  
 His flock, to taste the verdure of the morn.  
 Falsely luxurious, will not man awake,  
 And, springing from the bed of sloth, enjoy



7. The middle of the eighteenth century gave birth, we see, to good poets ; but it was nevertheless an unpoetical time. Some of those with whom we have just become acquainted, owed their popularity in part to those very qualities which are the blots of their works ; and their genius would have grown up more freely and borne richer fruit, had the climate been more propitious. Still later in the century, we find the prevailing poetical taste to be curiously illustrated by Johnson's "Lives of the Poets." These were introductory to a large collection of English Poetry ; the choice being made by the booksellers, who may fairly be presumed to have known what books were likely to tempt purchasers. We are not surprised to find that the older poets of the language were quite excluded ; but it is amusing and wonderful to reckon the host of dull rhymers from the early part of the century, whose works were admitted, and thought worthy to employ the pen of the first critic of the day.

Before that time, two of the finest and most poetical minds of our nation had been dwarfed and weakened by the ungenial atmosphere, so as to bequeath to posterity nothing more than a few lyrical fragments. In the age which admired the smooth feebleness of Shenstone's pastorals and elegies, and which closed when the ferocious libels of Churchill were held by many to be good examples of the poetical satire, Collins lived and died almost unknown, and Gray turned aside from the unrequited labours of verse to idle in his study.

b. 1716. } Gray was as consummate a poetical artist as Pope. His  
d. 1771. } fancy, again, was much less lively : but his sympathies were infinitely warmer and more expanded ; and he was unfettered by

The cool, the fragrant, and the silent hour,  
To meditation due and sacred song !

\* \* \* \* \*

But yonder comes the powerful King of Day,  
Rejoicing in the east. The lessening cloud,  
The kindling azure, and the mountain's brow  
Illumed with fluid gold, his near approach  
Betoken glad. Lo ! now apparent all,  
Aslant the dew-bright earth and colour'd air,  
He looks in boundless majesty abroad ;  
And sheds the shining day, that burnish'd plays  
On rocks, and hills, and towers, and wandering streams,  
High-gleaming from afar. Prime cheerer, Light !  
Of all material beings first, and best !  
Efflux divine ! Nature's resplendent robe !  
Without whose vesting beauty all were wrapt  
In unessential gloom ; and thou, oh Sun !  
Soul of surrounding worlds, in whom best seen  
Shines out thy Maker ! May I sing of thee ?



the matter-of-fact tendency of the French school. The polished aptness of language, and exact symmetry of construction, which give so classical an aspect to his Odes, do unquestionably bring with them a tinge of classical coldness ; and the want of passionate movement is felt particularly in his most ambitious pieces. He is stronger in feeling than in imagery : the Ode on Eton College, with its touches of pathos and flashes of allegory, is more genuinely lyrical than "The Bard;" and the "Progress of Poesy" is most poetical in its passages of fanciful repose. The Elegy in a Country Churchyard is perhaps faultless.\*

\* THOMAS GRAY.

*From the "Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College."*

Ye distant spires, ye antique towers,  
That crown the watery glade,  
Where grateful science still adores  
Her Henry's hoary shade ;  
And ye that from the stately brow  
Of Windsor's heights the expanse below  
Of grove, of lawn, of mead survey ;  
Whose turf, whose shade, whose flowers among  
Wanders the hoary Thames along  
His silver-winding way !

Ah, happy hills ! Ah, pleasing shade !  
Ah, fields beloved in vain !  
Where once my careless childhood strayed,  
A stranger yet to pain :  
I feel the gales that from ye blow,  
A momentary bliss bestow,  
As, waving fresh their gladsome wing,  
My weary soul they seem to soothe,  
And, redolent of joy and youth,  
To breathe a second spring.

Say, Father Thames ! for thou hast seen  
Full many a sprightly race,  
Disporting on thy margin green,  
The paths of pleasure trace ;  
Who foremost now delight to cleave  
With pliant arm thy glassy wave ?  
The captive linnæ which enthrall ?  
What idle progeny succeed,  
To chase the rolling circle's speed,  
Or urge the flying ball ?

\* \* \* \*

Gay hope is theirs, by fancy fed,  
Less pleasing when possess'd,  
The tear forgot as soon as shed,  
The sunshine of the breast.

b. 1720. } The Odes of Collins are fuller of the fine and spontane-  
 d. 1759. } ous enthusiasm of genius, than any other poems ever written by one who wrote so little. We close his tiny volume with the same disappointed surprise, which overcomes us when a harmonious piece of music suddenly ceases unfinished. His range of tones is very wide : it extends from the warmest rapture of self-entranced imagination, to a tenderness which makes some of his verses sound like gentle weeping. The delicacy of gradation with which he passes from thought to thought, has an indescribable charm, though not always unattended by obscurity ; and there is a marvellous power of suggestion in his clouds of allegoric imagery, so beautiful in outline, and coloured by a fancy so purely and ideally refined. His most popular poem, "The Passions," can hardly be allowed to be his best : of some of his most deeply marked characteristics it conveys no adequate idea. Readers who do not shrink from having their attention put to the stretch, and who can relish the finest and most recondite analogies, will delight in his Ode entitled "The

Theirs buxom health of rosy hue,  
 Wild wit, invention ever new,  
     And lively cheer, of vigour born ;  
 The thoughtless day, the easy night,  
 The spirits pure, the slumbers light,  
     That fly the approach of morn.

\* \* \* \*

Ambition this shall tempt to rise,  
     Then whirl the wretch from high,  
 To bitter Scorn a sacrifice,  
     And grinning Infamy.  
 The stings of Falsehood those shall try,  
 And hard Unkindness' alter'd eye,  
     That mocks the tear it forced to flow ;  
 And keen Remorse, with blood defiled,  
 And moody Madness, laughing wild  
     Amid severest woe.

\* \* \* \*

To each his sufferings ! All are men,  
     Condemn'd alike to groan ;  
 The tender for another's pain,  
     The unfeeling for his own.  
 Yet, ah ! why should they know their fate ;  
 Since sorrow never comes too late,  
     And happiness too swiftly flies ?  
 Thought would destroy their paradise.  
 No more ! where ignorance is bliss,  
     'Tis folly to be wise !

Manners," and in that, still nobler and more imaginative, "On the Poetical Character." Every one, surely, can understand and feel the beauty of such pieces as the Odes "To Pity," "To Simplicity," "To Mercy." Nor does it require much reflection to fit us for appreciating the spirited lyric "To Liberty;" or for being entranced by the finely-woven harmonies and the sweetly romantic pictures, which, in the "Ode to Evening," remind us of the youthful poems of Milton.\*

\* WILLIAM COLLINS.

I. ODE WRITTEN IN THE BEGINNING OF THE YEAR 1746.

How sleep the brave who sink to rest,  
By all their country's wishes blest!  
When Spring, with dewy fingers cold,  
Returns to deck their hallowed mould,  
She there shall dress a sweeter sod  
Than Fancy's feet have ever trod.

By Fairy hands their knell is rung;  
By forms unseen their dirge is sung:  
There Honour comes, a pilgrim gray,  
To bless the turf that wraps their clay;  
And Freedom shall awhile repair,  
To dwell, a weeping hermit, there.

II. ODE TO PITY.

*Pella's Bard is Euripides: The river Arun runs by the birthplace of Otway.*

Oh thou, the friend of man, assign'd  
With balmy hands his wounds to bind,  
And charm his frantic woe;  
When first Distress, with dagger keen,  
Broke forth to waste his destined scene,  
His wild unsated foe!

By Pella's Bard, a magic name,  
By all the griefs his thought could frame,  
Receive my humble rite!  
Long, Pity! let the nations view  
Thy sky-worn robes of tenderest blue,  
And eyes of dewy light!

But wherefore need I wander wide  
To old Ilyssus' distant side,  
Deserted stream and mute?  
Wild Arun too has heard thy strains,  
And Echo, 'midst my native plains,  
Been soothed by Pity's lute.

\* \* \* \*

Come, Pity, come ! By Fancy's aid,  
Ev'n now my thoughts, relenting maid !

Thy temple's pride design :  
Its southern site, its truth complete,  
Shall raise a wild enthusiast heat  
In all who view the shrine.

There Picture's toil shall well relate  
How Chance, or hard-involving Fate,  
O'er mortal bliss prevail :  
The buskin'd Muse shall near her stand,  
And, sighing, prompt her tender hand  
With each disastrous tale.

There let me oft, retired by day,  
In dreams of passion melt away,  
Allowed with thee to dwell ;  
There waste the mournful lamp of night,  
Till, Virgin ! thou again delight  
To hear a British shell !

## CHAPTER XII.

## THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

## SECTION FOURTH : THE LITERATURE OF THE THIRD GENERATION.

A. D. 1760—A. D. 1800.

George III.,.....1760-1800.

PROSE. 1. The Historians—Their Literary Character and Views of Art—Hume's History.—2. Robertson and Gibbon—The Character of each—Minor Historical Writers.—3. Miscellaneous Prose—Johnson's Talk and Boswell's Report of it—Goldsmith's Novels—Literature in Scotland—The first Edinburgh Review—Mackenzie's Novels—Other Novelists.—4. Criticism—Percy's Reliques—Warton's History—Parliamentary Eloquence—Edmund Burke—Letters.—5. Philosophy—(1.) Theory of Literature—Burke—Reynolds—Campbell—Home—Blair—Smith—(2.) Political Economy—Adam Smith.—6. Philosophy continued—(3.) Ethics—Adam Smith—Tucker—Paley—(4.) Metaphysics and Psychology—Thomas Reid.—7. Theology—(1.) Scientific—Campbell—Paley—Watson—Lowth—(2.) Practical—Porteous—Blair—Newton and others.—POETRY. 8. The Drama—Home's Douglas—Comedies of Goldsmith and Sheridan—Goldsmith's Descriptive Poems.—9. Minor Poets—Their Various Tendencies—Later Poems—Beattie's Minstrel.—10. The Genius and Writings of Cowper and Burns.

## PROSE LITERATURE.

1. BETWEEN the period we have last studied, and the reign of George the Third, there were several connecting links. One of these was formed by a group of Historians, whose works must always be classical monuments in English literature. The publication of Hume's History of England began in 1754: Robertson's History of Scotland appeared in 1759, and was followed by his Reign of Charles the Fifth, and his History of America; and Gibbon's Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire was completed in twelve years from 1776.

These celebrated men, and others who profited by their teaching, viewed a great history as a work of literary art, as a work in which the manner of communication ought to possess an excellence corre-



spondent to the value of the knowledge communicated. It is likewise characteristic of them, that, while all were active thinkers, and found or made occasion for imparting the fruits of their reflection, their works are properly Histories, not Historical Dissertations. They are narratives of events, in which the elucidation of the laws of human nature or of the progress of society is introduced merely as illustrative and subordinate. The distinction is note-worthy for us, in whose time the favourite method of historical writing is of the contrary kind.

Perhaps history, so conceived and limited, was never written b. 1711. }  
d. 1776. } better than by David Hume. Never was the narrative of interesting incidents told with greater clearness, and good-sense, and quiet force of representation: never were the characters, and thoughts, and feelings of historical personages described in a manner more calculated to excite the feeling of dramatic reality, yet without overstepping the propriety of historical truth, or trespassing on the prominence due to great facts and great principles. His style may be said to display, generically, the natural and colloquial character of the early writers of the century. But it is specifically distinguished by features giving it an aspect very unlike theirs. It has not their strength and closeness of idiom; a want attributable to two causes. Hume was a Scotsman, born in a country whose dialect was then yet more distant than it now is from English purity; and French studies concurred with French reading in determining still further his turn of phraseology and construction. It has been the duty of more recent writers to protest against his strong spirit of partisanship, which is made the more seductive by his constant good-temper and kindness of manner; and his consultation of original authorities was so very negligent, that his evidence is quite worthless on disputed historical questions. But, if his matter had been as carefully studied as his manner, and if his social and religious theories had been as sound as his theory of literary art, Hume's history would still have held a place from which no rival could have hoped to degrade it.

2. In their manner of expression, Robertson and Gibbon, though unlike each other, are equally unlike Hume. They want his seemingly unconscious ease, his delicate tact, his calm yet lively simplicity. Hume tells his tale to us as a friend to friends: his successors always seem to hold that they are teachers and we their pupils. This change of tone had long been coming on, and was now very general in all departments of prose: very few writers belonging to the last thirty years of Johnson's life escaped the epidemic disease of dictatorship. Both Robertson and Gibbon may have been,

by circumstances peculiar to each of them, predisposed to adopt the fashionable garb of dignity. The temptation of the former lay simply in his provincial position, which made his mastery of the language a thing to be attained only by study and imitation. An untraveller Scotsman might have aspired to harangue like Rasselas, but durst not dream of talking like Will Honeycomb. Yet Robertson attained a degree of facility, smoothness, and correctness, which in the circumstances was wonderful. Gibbon's pompousness, which has justly become proverbial, was probably caused in part by his self-esteem, naturally inordinate, and pampered by years of solitary study; and it must have been cherished also by his half-avowed consciousness of the hostility in which his evil religious opinions placed him, towards those to whom his work was addressed. The peculiarity of his very peculiar style may perhaps be analyzed into a few elements. His words are always those of Latin root, not of Saxon, unless when these cannot be avoided: his favourite idioms and constructions are French, not English: and the structure of his sentences is so complex as to threaten obscurity, but so monotonously uniform that his practised dexterity of hand easily avoided the snare.

*b. 1722. } Robertson is an excellent story-teller, perspicuous, lively,*  
*d. 1793. }* and interesting: his opinions are formed with good judgment, and always temperately expressed: and his disquisitions, such as his view of the Progress of Society in the Middle Ages, are singularly able and instructive. His research was industrious and accurate, to a degree which, notwithstanding many unfavourable circumstances, makes him still to be a valuable historical authority.

*b. 1737. } The learning of Gibbon, though not in all points very ex-*  
*d. 1794. }* act, was remarkably extensive; and it was fully sufficient to make him a trustworthy guide through the vast region he traverses, unless in those quarters where he was inclined to lead us astray. His work was first conceived in Rome, "as he sat musing amidst the ruins of the Capitol, while the barefooted friars were singing vespers in the temple of Jupiter:" and its prevalent tone might, with no very wide stretch of fancy, be supposed to retain symptoms of that evening's meditation. There is a patrician haughtiness in the stately march of his narrative, and in the air of careless superiority with which he treats both his heroes and his audience; and, contemplating the actions of his story in such a spirit as if he shrunk from Christian truth because he had known it only as alloyed by superstitious error, he honours the ruthless bravery of the conqueror and the politic craft of the statesman, but is unable to appreciate the hermit's humble piety or the heroic self-sacrifice of

the martyr. His manner wants that dramatic animation, which would entitle him to be ranked in the highest order of historians, and for which he was disqualified by his coldness of feeling. He seems to describe, not scenes in which living men act, but pictures in which those scenes are represented: and in this art of picturesque narration he is a master. Nor is he less skilful in indirect insinuation; which, indeed, is his favourite and usual method of communicating his opinions, although most striking in those many passages in his history of the church, where he covertly attacks a religion which he neither believed nor understood.

Among other historians of the time was Smollett, whose History of England has no claim to remembrance except the celebrity otherwise gained by the author. Ferguson's History of the Roman Republic is not only well written, but meritorious for its researches into the constitution of Rome. Of the many historical and antiquarian works, the value of whose matter exceeds their literary merit, it may be enough to name those of two Scotsmen; Henry's History of Great Britain, and Sir David Dalrymple's Annals of Scotland, both of which have saved much toil to their successors. To this period, more conveniently than to the next, may be assigned the Grecian Histories of Gillies and Mitford, each useful in its day, especially the latter, but both now altogether superseded.

3. While the historians thus produced works on which, more than on anything else, the literary reputation of the time depended, other men of letters exerted themselves so actively and so variously, that it is difficult to describe their efforts briefly.

b. 1709. } Johnson, seated at last in his easy-chair, talked incessantly for twenty years: his dogmatical announcements of opinion were received as oracular by the literary world: and, soon after his death, Boswell's clever record of his conversations gave to the name of this remarkable man a place in our literature, which, in our day, is commonly held to be more secure than that which he had obtained by his writings.

In the large circle of his friends and admirers, none was more respectful or more beloved than the amiable and artless Goldsmith. Yet none of them had so much native originality of genius, or deviated so far from the track of his patron. Though his poems had never been written, he would stand among the classics of English prose, in virtue of the few trifles on which he was able, in the intervals snatched from his literary drudgery, to exercise his power of shrewd observation and natural invention, and to exhibit his warm affections and purity of moral sentiment. Such is his inimitable little novel, "The Vicar of Wakefield;" and

such, though less valuable, is the good-natured satire on society which he called "The Citizen of the World." It consists of letters in which a Chinese, visiting England, relates to friends at home what he saw and what he thought of it. In good-humoured irony, Goldsmith is here admirable: there are some comic scenes of domestic life, such as the household of Beau Tibbs, which are not surpassed by anything of the sort in our language; while the interest is varied by little flights of romance, lively criticisms on the state of learning and the arts, and despondent caricature (which no one had better opportunities of sketching from the life) of the miseries of men whose trade was authorship.\* Goldsmith's style

\* OLIVER GOLDSMITH.

*From "The Citizen of the World:" Letter XXVIII.*

Were we to estimate the learning of the English by the number of books that are every day published among them, perhaps no country, not even China itself, could equal them in this particular. I have reckoned not less than twenty-three new books published in one day; which, upon computation, makes eight thousand three hundred and ninety-five in one year. Most of these are not confined to one single science, but embrace the whole circle. History, politics, poetry, mathematics, metaphysics, and the philosophy of nature, are all comprised in a manual not larger than that in which our children are taught the letters. If, then, we suppose the learned of England to read but an eighth part of the works which daily come from the press, (and sure none can pretend to learning upon more easy terms,) at this rate every scholar will read a thousand books in one year. From such a calculation, you may conjecture what an amazing fund of literature a man must be possessed of, who thus reads three new books every day, not one of which but contains all the good things that ever were said or written.

And yet, I know not how it happens: but the English are not, in reality, so learned as would seem from this calculation. We meet but few who know all arts and sciences in perfection; whether it is that the generality are incapable of such extensive knowledge, or that the authors of those books are not adequate instructors. In China, the Emperor himself takes cognizance of all the doctors in the kingdom who profess authorship. In England, every man may be an author that can write: for they have by law a liberty, not only of saying what they please, but of being also as dull as they please.

Yesterday I testified my surprise to the man in black, where writers could be found in sufficient number to throw off the books I daily saw crowding from the press. I at first imagined, that their learned seminaries might take this method of instructing the world: but my companion assured me that the doctors of colleges never wrote, and that some of them had actually forgot their reading. "But, if you desire," continued he, "to see a collection of authors, I fancy I can introduce you this evening to a club, which assembles every Saturday at seven, at the sign of the Broom near Islington, to talk over the business of the last and the entertainment of the week ensuing."

I accepted his invitation: we walked together, and entered the house some time before the usual hour for the company assembling. My friend took



is as near an approach as his time made possible, to the colloquial ease of Addison.

In the meantime, intellectual action had begun to diffuse itself from a new centre. Edinburgh was the dwelling-place of Robertson and Hume, around whom were gathered other thinking and instructed men. In 1755, there was attempted an "Edinburgh Review," designed to be half-yearly; but only two numbers appeared, containing several papers written by Robertson, with others by Adam Smith and Blair, whom we shall soon meet again in company with aspirants from more remote parts of Scotland. In 1779, the Periodical Essays of Queen Anne's time were revived, almost for the last time, by a new race of men of letters, in the Scottish metropolis. "The Mirror," and its successor, "The Lounger," were

b. 1745. } edited by Henry Mackenzie, whose venerable old-age car-  
d. 1831. } ried him, like a patriarch surviving the flood, through the first generation of the nineteenth century. Tasteful, rather than vigorous, those periodicals owe their chief merit to his smaller tales.

He had already published his best novel, "The Man of Feeling," which, coming not long after Goldsmith's masterpiece, was far from being unworthy of the companionship. With little force of character, and a finical refinement both of diction and of sentiment, Mackenzie's novels have a delightful harmony of feeling, which often flows out into pathetic tenderness.

Among the later novelists of the time, there are none that call for much notice. It is enough to name Walpole, Moore, Cumberland, Mrs Inchbald, and Charlotte Smith. The last of these, especially, did much to prepare the way for the greater prevalence of nature and common-sense in this kind of writing, the seductions of which for the writer are not less than those which it holds out to the reader. We might not unwillingly be tempted to linger a little longer, by the farcical humour of Miss Burney, or the melo-dramatic horrors of Mrs Radcliffe; and, if we were here inclined to study novels deeply, these two writers would, for different reasons, require close attention.

4. In Literary Criticism, the authoritative book of the day was Johnson's "Lives of the Poets," with which we have become acquainted already. Sixteen years before its appearance, there had been laid in silence the foundations of a new and purer poetical taste. The year 1765 was the date of Percy's "Reliques of Ancient English  
this opportunity of letting me into the characters of the principal members of the club; not even the host excepted, who, it seems, was once an author himself, but preferred by a bookseller to this situation as a reward for his former service.



Poetry," a selection from old ballads and other early poems of a lyrical cast, many of the ruder pieces being modernized and completed by the editor. This delightful compilation, quite neglected for many years, became the poetical text-book of Sir Walter Scott and the poets of his time. A greater impression was made by a more scientific and ambitious effort in the same direction, War-  
*b.* 1729. } ton's "History of English Poetry," which was commenced  
*d.* 1790. } in 1774, and left unfinished when the author died. His survey starts from a point not long after the Conquest, and is broken off abruptly in the reign of Elizabeth. The work has so much both of antiquarian learning, of poetical taste, and of spirited writing, that it is not only an indispensable and valuable authority, but in many parts an interesting book to the mere amateur. Not without many errors, and presenting a still larger number of deficiencies, it yet has little chance of being ever entirely superseded. Along with Warton should be named his ill-natured adversary Ritson, who rendered great services to our early poetry, especially by setting the example of scrupulously correct editing.

In elementary studies like ours, we cannot undertake to deal with the Parliamentary Eloquence of our country. But we ought to learn, that the earliest specimens of its greatness may be said to have been given before the middle of the eighteenth century, in the commanding addresses of the elder Pitt, more commonly known as Earl of Chatham. The close of our period shows us, as still leading the senate, the younger Pitt, Fox, and Sheridan; along  
*b.* 1730. } with whom stood a much greater man, Edmund Burke, the  
*d.* 1797. } most gorgeous and rotund of orators. Burke, indeed, must be remembered, in virtue not only of his speeches, but of his writings on political and social questions, as a very great thinker, comprehensive and versatile in intellect, and deriving an extraordinary power of eloquence from that concrete and imaginative character which belonged distinctively to his manner of thought.

Our miscellaneous memoranda must contain two collections of Letters, thoroughly unlike each other in everything except their goodness of style: those of Walpole, poignantly satirical and bad-hearted; and those of the poet Cowper, which are not only models of easy writing, but lessons of rare dignity and purity in sentiment.

5. In the History of Philosophy, for Great Britain as well as for the continental nations, the middle of the eighteenth century was a very important epoch. It introduced, in our own country, a series of thinkers, whose opinions, whether adverse to those of their predecessors or founded on them, were yet, in most departments of philosophical study, entitled to be regarded as new: and, before

the century was ended, almost all those works had appeared, which have had the greatest influence on more recent thinking.

The purpose of our present studies does not allow us to attempt knowing thoroughly, or weighing exactly, speculations of an abstract kind. The little we can take time to learn may be gathered most easily, if all the works we have to deal with are arranged in Four Classes.

The First of these includes disquisitions on the Theory of Literature or any of its applications; a theory which now began to be known among us by the name of Philosophical Criticism, and which is really a branch of philosophy properly so called, the philosophy of the human mind. Our earliest specimen was Burke's treatise "On the Sublime and Beautiful," an inquiry, neither successful nor eloquent, into phenomena, the explanation of which is essential to a just theory of poetry. The close relations between poetry and the other fine arts, such as painting, might entitle us to include in our list a series of treatises much more valuable, the Discourses of the celebrated painter Sir Joshua Reynolds. The other works to be named are confined to literature; and, all the writers being Scotsmen, it was perhaps natural that they should occupy themselves much with the laws of style. By far the ablest of these was

b. 1709. } Campbell's "Philosophy of Rhetoric," a treatise showing,  
d. 1796. } like all the author's works, very much both of cool sagacity and of independent thinking. "The Elements of Criticism," by Henry Home, usually known as Lord Kames, has a great deal of speculative ingenuity; and the merit of Blair's "Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres" lies in their good taste and the elaborate elegance of the language. Some contributions which Adam Smith made to this field of inquiry contain very original views. It is convenient, though not quite correct, to class along with these writers Horne Tooke, who produced, at the close of the century, its best contribution to the Philosophy of Language. No book on the subject has caused more thinking than his acute and paradoxical "Diversions of Purley."

b. 1723. } Adam Smith will stand alone in our Second Department,  
d. 1790. } in virtue of his great work, "The Wealth of Nations," which is still universally acknowledged as the standard text-book in Political Economy.

6. We encounter Smith yet again, when we pass, Thirdly, to Ethics or Moral Philosophy. His "Theory of Moral Sentiments" is the most readable of abstract treatises: its style is excellent; and its illustrations are abundant and interesting. Many of its special analyses of mental phenomena are masterly: but the leading doctrine, which resolves all moral feelings into Sympathy, is nothing better than

an ingeniously defended paradox. A more prominent place in the history of moral science belongs to two English writers, who stand related as master and pupil, and agree in seeking to establish the identity of Virtue with Utility. The earlier of them was Tucker, whom Paley frankly avowed to have given, by his finely reflective "Light of Nature Pursued," very much assistance towards the

b. 1743. } ethical section of his own "Principles of Moral and Political  
d. 1805. } Philosophy."

Vigorously homely in language and illustration, methodical and dexterous in argument, and imposingly positive in assertion, Paley's work could not fail to be welcomed by English thinkers, on account of its skilful defence of a view of human nature, which chimes in with the tendencies of the national character.

Works falling into our Fourth Department would commonly be described as dealing with Metaphysics. But, as they undertake to inquire, not only into the origin and validity of human knowledge, but also into the nature and relations of all mental phenomena, they should be described as treating likewise of Psychology. They are often described by their authors as relating to the Philosophy of the Human Mind. We require here to note only the rise of that which has been called the Scottish School of Metaphysics; and in

b. 1710. } it again we do enough, if we make ourselves acquainted  
d. 1796. } with Thomas Reid the founder. For Beattie, the most eminent of his immediate disciples, and a very pleasing writer, did little or nothing of real service to philosophy. Reid's doctrines were first explained in his "Inquiry into the Human Mind," and afterwards systematically expounded in his "Essays on the Intellectual and Active Powers of Man." His position is essentially controversial. He combats each of three schools of philosophy: first, the Sensualistic, evolved out of Locke, which holds all our ideas to be primarily derived from sensation; secondly, the Idealistic, in the form proposed by Berkeley, which, allowing the existence of mind, denies that of matter; thirdly, the Sceptical, headed by Hume, which denies that we can know anything at all. The first of these doctrines, according to Reid, overlooks important elements of knowledge, and leads directly to the third; the second is refuted by every man's consciousness; and the third we cannot so much as assert, without contradicting that very assertion. The positive doctrines of Reid's own system could not be understood without much explanation; and his own exposition of them is very imperfect. Indeed the constant occurrence of polemical matter, and the repetitions which his Essays derived from their original shape of Lectures, are the circumstances that chiefly injure the literary value of the work. He is a bald and dry, but very

clear and logical writer ; and never was there a more sincere lover of truth, or a more candid and honourable disputant. His slow and patient thinking, notwithstanding a strong aversion to close analysis, led him to some very striking results, out of which his whole scheme is developed. The originality of these is much greater than his own manner of expounding them would lead us to suppose ; and their importance in the history of philosophy may be estimated from this fact, that Reid's metaphysical creed does really coincide with the first and most characteristic step in that of his German contemporary Kant.

7. It is satisfactory to find, among those we have learned to know as leaders in philosophy, several who distinguished themselves also as advocates of truths yet more precious.

The most valuable contributions to Theological Literature were those which undertook to defend religion, natural and revealed, both against the attacks of avowed infidelity, and against the more insidious dangers that arose, towards the close of the century, from the ferment of opinions communicated by the convulsions of the continent. The series began with Campbell's excellently reasoned "Essay on Miracles," an answer to the most popular of Hume's arguments against revelation. Paley's three works of this class are, all of them, standard authorities. In the "*Horæ Paulinæ*" he proves, from undesigned coincidences, the genuineness both of Saint Paul's Epistles and of the narrative given in the Acts of the Apostles. His "View of the Evidences of Christianity" is chiefly employed in establishing the credibility of the evangelists ; from which must be inferred the truth of the gospel miracles, and from that again the divine mission of the Saviour. His "Natural Theology" is an illustration, alike skilful and interesting, of that which has been called the *à posteriori* argument for the existence of the Supreme Being ; an argument founded on the proofs of benevolent design manifested in the works of creation. Last of all we have Bishop Watson's vigorous "Apology for Christianity," directed against Gibbon ; and his "Apology for the Bible," in which he answers, with equal force, the cavils of a more recent and less able adversary.

Among the other works of the times, in which theology was treated scientifically, the most noticeable are those which may be described as Critical. Such were Bishop Lowth's refined and tasteful "Lectures on the Poetry of the Hebrews," and his "Translation of the Prophet Isaiah." Of another temper, energetic and original in thinking, and very powerfully suggestive of thought, were the views set forth by Campbell, in his "Translation of the Gospels," with its dissertations.



The press now teemed with Sermons, and gave forth also not a few larger treatises on points of Practical Theology. Most of these, however, do not exemplify so well the literary ability of the age, as the increasing inclination of men's minds to serious thought and sentiment. Of the sermon-writers who were then most popular, especially among educated persons, but whose works are now much neglected, those whose literary merit is highest were Bishop Porteous and Dr Blair. An influence much more permanent has been exerted by a class of religious writers, whose views had always found literary representatives in the Church of England, but had been more decisively expressed by the earlier Nonconformists: writers whose ecclesiastical code was taught by Usher, not by Laud; writers whose confession of religious faith, not less than their tone of religious feeling, was inherited from Usher and Owen, not from Tillotson or South. Eminent among the most devout and energetic teachers of religion in this devout and energetic school, was John Newton of Olney, the spiritual guide of the poet Cowper. We might refer either to the last century, or to the present, a few other writings of no great literary merit, bearing the same honourable stamp: the novels and miscellaneous works of Hannah More; Wilberforce's "Practical View of Christianity"; and "The History of the Church of Christ" by the brothers Milner.

#### POETICAL LITERATURE.

8. Sinking from theology to the Drama, we shall not be detained long from other kinds of poetry. The only Tragedy of our forty years which has really survived, is the "Douglas" of Home, whose sweet melody and romantic pathos lose much of their effect through its artificial monotony of tone, and its feebleness in the representation of character. Mason's *Caractacus*, an historical tragedy with a classical chorus, is memorable for the courage of the attempt. Comedy, now always written in prose, was oftener successful, yet not very often. There was no literary merit of a high kind in the plays of the elder Colman, of Mrs Cowley, or of Cumberland. At the beginning of the time, however, appeared the comedies of Goldsmith, abounding (especially "*She Stoops to Conquer*") in humour, variety of characterization, and lively and harmless gaiety. Later comes Sheridan, with his unintermitted fire of epigrammatic witticisms, his keen insight into the follies and weaknesses of society, and his great ingenuity in inventing whimsical situations: qualities which entitle him to be compared, in respect of literary skill, with the comic writers of Congreve's time; while his moral tone, though far from being actually impure, deserves no positive commendation.



Of the Writers of Verse in the time of Johnson's old age, Goldsmith alone has achieved immortality. "The Traveller" and "The Deserted Village" cannot be forgotten, until the English tongue shall have ceased to be understood. A pleasing poet, not a great one, he was nevertheless greater than he or his friends knew. An indescribable charm pervades those beautiful pieces of poetical description and reflection, so musical in versification, so vividly natural in scenery, so gently touching in sentiment. Both of them were valued, in their own day, not for their poetical excellence only, but for the principles which they maintained in regard to the organization of society. It is a fact not to be overlooked, by those who assign a high rank to the didactic functions of the poet, that Goldsmith did his best to teach a false political economy, while Adam Smith was writing "The Wealth of Nations." \*

\* OLIVER GOLDSMITH.

*From "The Deserted Village."*

In all my wanderings round this world of care,  
In all my griefs—and God has given my share—  
I still had hopes my latest years to crown,  
Amidst these humble bowers to lay me down ;  
To husband out life's taper at the close,  
And keep the flame from wasting by repose.  
I still had hopes, (for pride attends us still),  
Amidst the swains to show my book-learned skill ;  
Around my fire an evening group to draw,  
And tell of all I felt and all I saw.

And, as a hare whom hounds and horns pursue,  
Pants to the place from whence at first he flew,  
I still had hopes, my long vexations past,  
Here to return—and die at home at last !

Oh blest retirement ! friend to life's decline !  
Retreat from care, that never must be mine !  
How blest is he who crowns, in shades like these,  
A youth of labour with an age of ease ;  
Who quits a world where strong temptations try,  
And, since 'tis hard to combat, learns to fly !

For him no wretch is born to work and weep,  
Explore the mine or tempt the dangerous deep :  
No surly porter stands in guilty state,  
To spurn imploring Famine from the gate.  
But on he moves to meet his latter end,  
Angels around befriending virtue's friend ;  
Sinks to the grave with unperceived decay,  
While Resignation gently slopes the way ;  
And, all his prospects brightening to the last,  
His Heaven commences ere the world be past !

9. The foundations of a new poetical school were already laid. Percy's Collection of Reliques was published between Goldsmith's two poems: and, a little earlier, Macpherson had electrified the republic of letters by "Fingal, an ancient Epic Poem." The attention bestowed, not altogether unworthily, on his Ossianic fragments, was a hopeful symptom: so were the attempts made, though mainly for political reasons, to push into fame the elegant but cold Epics of Glover. The seed was sown: but it was long in vegetating. In our own day we still encounter, though not very often, verses of some of the minor poets: such as Armstrong, Smollett, Langhorne, Warton, and Mason; or Bruce, Logan, and Fergusson. Hoole translated Tasso and Ariosto very tamely from the Italian; while the Portuguese poet Camoens was rendered by Mickle with spirit but incorrectness. Some light poetical pieces of our own time, especially satires of Moore, have been modelled on the comic rhymes of Anstey.

The short career of the unhappy Chatterton held out wonderful promise, both of genius, and of the employment of it in a worthy sphere. But, when we enter "The Botanic Garden" of Darwin, we find that we have been enticed back into the wilderness of didactic verse: while this masterly versifier exemplifies also, almost everywhere, one of the most common of poetical errors; namely, the attempt to make poetry describe minutely the sensible appearances of corporeal objects, instead of being content with communicating the feelings which those objects awaken.

b. 1735. } Beattie's "Minstrel" presents a marked and agreeable  
d. 1803. } contrast to Darwin. It is the outpouring of a mind exquisitely poetical in feeling, and instinctively true to the just methods of poetical representation. Many of his descriptions are most vividly suggestive; although his strength lies, not so much in illustrating external objects by describing the emotions which they cause, as in the converse process of illustrating mental phenomena by touches of external scenery. Indeed, his deficiency in keen observation of the material world is one of the points in which he falls short of Goldsmith: and another is his want of that dramatic power, by which a poet becomes qualified to represent the characters and sentiments of others. The Minstrel is a kind of autobiography, an analytic narrative of the early growth of a poet's mind and heart. Taken all in all, it is one of the most delightful poems in our language.\*

\* JAMES BEATTIE.

*From "The Minstrel:" Book First.*

Then grieve not, thou, to whom th' indulgent Muse  
Vouchsafes a portion of celestial fire:

10. The poetical annals of our period, opening with Oliver Goldsmith, close with William Cowper and Robert Burns.

b. 1731. } The unequalled popularity, gained and still preserved by  
 d. 1800. } Cowper's poems, is owing to several causes, besides the  
 favour which, in the rarity of good religious poetry, is so readily  
 extended to all productions of that class showing either power or  
 promise. The most powerful of these causes is, doubtless, their  
 genuine force and originality of poetical portraiture. The character-  
 istic features which distinguish this remarkable writer from his recent  
 predecessors are two. Refusing to confine himself to that digni-  
 fied and elaborate diction which had become habitual in English  
 verse, he unhesitatingly made poetry use, always when it was con-  
 venient, the familiar speech of common conversation. He showed  
 yet greater boldness, by seeking to interest his readers in the scenes  
 and relations of every-day life, and in those objects of reflection  
 which are most strikingly real. Yet his language is often vulgar,  
 and not least so when his theme is most sublime; and his most suc-  
 cessful passages, his minutely touched descriptions of familiar still-  
 life and rural scenery, are indeed strongly suggestive, but have little  
 of the delicate susceptibility of beauty which breathes through  
 Thomson's musings on nature. Wordsworth, who knew well the  
 importance of classifications of kind, as indicating the particular  
 aim of a poem, and thus modifying all its elements, experienced  
 not a little difficulty in determining the genus to which should be  
 assigned Cowper's masterpiece, "The Task." He regards it as  
 standing, along with "The Night-Thoughts," in a composite class,  
 combining the Philosophical Satire, the Didactic Poem, and the  
 Idyl or poem of description and reflection. The poet's para-

Nor blame the partial Fates, if they refuse

Th' imperial banquet and the rich attire :

Know thine own worth, and reverence the lyre !

Wilt thou debase the heart which God refined ?

No ! let thy Heaven-taught soul to Heaven aspire,

To fancy, freedom, harmony, resign'd ;

Ambition's grovelling crew for ever left behind !

Oh, how canst thou renounce the boundless store

Of charms which Nature to her votary yields !

The warbling woodlands, the resounding shore,

The pomp of groves, and garniture of fields ;

All that the genial ray of morning gilds,

And all that echoes to the song of even ;

All that the mountain's sheltering bosom shields,

And all the dread magnificence of heaven ;

Oh, how canst thou renounce, and hope to be forgiven !

mount aim, in that work as elsewhere, is perhaps didactic: and he often delights us most by exciting trains of thought and feeling, which are not in any just sense poetical. This tendency being united with his idiomatic plainness of style, we seem often as if we were listening to an observant, thoughtful, and imaginative speaker, who now argues and comments in sensible prose, and now breaks out into snatches of striking and poetical verse. Yet, in spite of these things, in spite of the frequent clumsiness of the satire, and the painful impression caused by the gloom which sometimes darkens the devout rapture, the effect is such as only a genuine poet could have produced.\*

Perhaps it may be merely an eccentricity of taste, that here suggests a protest on behalf of our poet's neglected version of Homer in blank verse. His *Iliad*, it must be allowed, if it has the simplicity of the original, wants its warlike fervour; but we cannot

\* WILLIAM COWPER.

*From "The Winter Walk at Noon."*

There is in souls a sympathy with sounds;  
And, as the mind is pitch'd, the ear is pleased  
With melting airs or martial, brisk or grave:  
Some chord in unison with what we hear  
Is touch'd within us; and the heart replies.  
How soft the music of those village bells,  
Falling at intervals upon the ear  
In cadence sweet, now dying all away;  
Now pealing loud again, and louder still,  
Clear and sonorous, as the gale comes on!

With easy force it opens all the cells  
Where Memory slept. Wherever I have heard  
A kindred melody, the scene recurs,  
And with it all its pleasures and its pains.

\* \* \* \* \*

The night was winter in his roughest mood,  
The morning sharp and clear. But now, at noon,  
Upon the southern side of the slant hills,  
And where the woods fence off the northern blast,  
The season smiles, resigning all its rage,  
And has the warmth of May. The vault is blue  
Without a cloud; and white without a speck  
The dazzling splendour of the scene below.

Again the harmony comes o'er the vale  
And through the trees I view th' embattled tower,  
Whence all the music. I again perceive  
The soothing influence of the wafted strains;  
And settle in soft musings, as I tread  
The walk, still verdant, under oaks and elms,  
Whose outspread branches overarch the glade.

help thinking that the romantic adventures of the *Odyssey*, and, above all, its descriptions of scenery, are rendered with exceeding felicity of poetic effect.

Our estimate of Cowper's poems is inevitably heightened by our love and pity for the poet, writing, not for fame, but for consolation, and uttering, from the depths of a half-broken heart, his reverent homage to the power of religious truth. Our affection will not be colder, and our compassion is tenfold more profound, b. 1759. }  
d. 1796. } when we contemplate the agitated and erring life of Robert Burns. Shutting our eyes to everything in his works that is unworthy of him, and proud to know that in the rest a Scottish peasant has given to the literature of the Anglo-Saxon race some of its most precious jewels, we yet cannot but feel, that all which this extraordinary man achieved was earnest of what he might have done, rather than performance adequate to the power and the vast variety of his endowments. His Songs have entranced readers who were at first repelled by their dialect; and it is on these that his fame rests most firmly. No lyrics in any tongue have a more wonderful union of thrilling passion, melting tenderness, concentrated expressiveness of language, and apt and natural poetic fancy. But neither the song, nor any of the higher kinds of lyrical verse, could have given scope for other qualities which he has elsewhere shown: his aptness in seizing and representing the phases of human character; his genial breadth and keenness of humour; and the strength of creative imagination with which he rises into the regions of the allegoric and supernatural. The strange tale of "Tam o' Shanter" is the assay-piece of a poet, who, if born under a more benignant star, might perhaps have been a second Chaucer.



## CHAPTER XIII.

## THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.

## SECTION FIRST: THE CHARACTER OF THE PERIOD.

A. D. 1800—A. D. 1852.

1. General Character of the Last Fifty Years—Two Ages embraced in the Period.—2. The First Age—Its Poetry—Its Poetical Eminence and Characteristics.—3. The First Age—Its Prose—Novels—The Reviews and other Periodicals—Variety of its Productions.—4. Foreign Impulses affecting the whole Period.—5. The Second Age—Its Mixed Character—Its Social Aspects.

1. THE Nineteenth Century is, naturally, for us, more interesting than any other period in English Literature: and, among all of them, there is perhaps none which will receive more curious attention from literary students, hereafter, than the fifty years of it that have already elapsed.

The intellectual character of the time is so novel as well as so various, as to be in itself peculiarly difficult of analysis: and we, whose minds have been moulded on its lessons, are not favourably placed, either for comprehending it profoundly, or for impartially estimating the value of the monuments it has produced.

Unquestionably it has been, and is, a time of extraordinary mental activity; and that, too, not only exerted by men of very uncommon endowments, but diffusing itself more widely than ever before throughout the nation at large. While books have been multiplied beyond precedent, readers have become more numerous in a proportion yet greater; and the diffusion of general enlightenment has been aimed at, not less zealously than the discovery of new truths. The critical and questioning temper, which cannot but reign in a state of society like ours, has been guided by an eager warmth very unlike to the tendency of the eighteenth century: nor is it less encouraging to observe, how the increasing animation of spirit has arisen out of an increasing inclination among literary men to inter-

est themselves, though not always wisely, in important social problems. While no other time since the birth of our nation has exhibited so surprising a variety in the kinds of literature cultivated, none has been distinguished so honourably by the prevalence of enlightened and philanthropic sentiment, and none has accumulated so plentifully knowledge that is good for man.

The literary merit of our time is another question. It is a question which we have no reason to be ashamed of meeting: but, in the only answer that can as yet be risked, the half-century may most correctly be regarded as presenting two successive and dissimilar stages.

The first of these is by far the more brilliant of the two. To it belong not a few men of remarkable genius, who have departed long ago or recently, and some who, in honoured old-age, are still present among us. The train of public events, and the details of literary progress, concur in making it convenient to regard this opening epoch of the century as embracing its earliest thirty years. The animation and energy which characterized it, arose from the universal excitation of feeling, and the mighty collision of opinions, which broke out over all Europe with the first French Revolution; and the intellectual force of thinking men was kept alive by the fierce struggle which our nation maintained so long, almost single-handed, against the universal despotism that had taken root on the Continent. The strength of that age was greatest in poetry: but it gave birth, also, to much of valuable though not very profound speculation, and to still more of eloquent writing.

The particular survey to which we shall immediately submit this First Age in the century, will be the more satisfactory if we have previously glanced at some of its most prominent literary characteristics, taking, in succession, its poetry and its prose.

2. The Poetical Literature of that time has no parallel in our history, unless in a period scarcely longer, extending before and after the beginning of the seventeenth century. And the most cautious as well as competent critic of our day has said, setting aside the old drama, that "any comparison of the Elizabethan poetry, save Spenser's alone, with that of the nineteenth century, would show an extravagant predilection for the mere name or dress of antiquity." Nor, when we turn to the dramatic works of Shakespeare and his contemporaries, does it seem rash to claim a place as high as that of any of the minor dramatists, for the vigorous poets of our recent time. We are, surely, quite safe in believing, that the lovers of our poetical literature, when they have ranged over all its treasures, will find their richest stores of delight, after

Chaucer, Spenser, Shakspeare, and Milton, in the dramatic group which is headed by Fletcher and Jonson, and in the modern one in which are found, and not unaccompanied, Coleridge and Wordsworth, Scott and Byron. Exact comparison of the two groups is impossible; and, if it could be instituted, it would be un instructive. But, while most of the moderns we are considering stand morally much higher than our dramatic ancients, it is no more than an act of justice to our own times, to bear in mind this fact; that both of the illustrious bands excel more in originality of genius than in skill or perfection of execution.

The fact just noted, however, is a feature to be especially remembered as marking almost the whole of our recent poetry. Most of the poets not only neglect polishing in diction or melody, but are equally inattentive to symmetry of plan. Much of this may have been caused by the reaction which took place against the cold elaboration of the preceding century: in part, also, it may be attributed to the spirited vehemence of excitement, from which the writers inhaled so much of their strength. But the want of that deliberate mastery, which only can generate perfection in art, is common to the most reflective with the most passionate of them. Byron, in his sketches of tales, poured out in ceaseless succession, is not more deficient in skill as an artist, than Wordsworth in his *Excursion*, the huge fragment of an unmanageable design cherished throughout a long and thoughtful lifetime.

Another feature is this; that the poems which made the strongest impression were of the Narrative kind. That and the Drama, indeed, may be said to be the only forms of poetic representation adequate either to embody the spirit, or extensively to interest the sympathies, of an age and nation immersed in the turmoil of energetic action. Why the drama has of late been written rarely and with small effect, is a question too difficult for us. But we may ask ourselves what the poetry of Scott or Byron might probably have been, in form as well as in matter, if they had been born under the literary supremacy of Samuel Johnson; remembering, at the same time, what it was they did perform, living in the agitated era of Napoleon. On the other hand, we must not overlook the position of Wordsworth. He, uniting in an unusual degree the poetic faculty with the love of reflection, but possessing very little power of representing the complication and hurry of human action and character, indulges his didactic inclination everywhere, and not least when the form of his pieces is other than didactic. His most valuable works are lessons in philosophy, as well as galleries of poetical pictures. Nor should it either be forgotten, or imputed

as an inexcusable fault to the contemporaries of his early life, that the hearers whom he then persuaded to listen to him, were, though fit, yet very few.

3. Amongst the innumerable Prose Writings of our first age, various in the extreme both in form and in matter, there were two kinds of composition which employed a larger fund of literary genius than any other, and exercised a wider influence. These were the Novels and Romances, and the Reviews and other Periodicals.

The Novel-writing was a phenomenon very curious, not only for the unusually high rank it acquired in the world of letters, chiefly through its greatest master, but also for the improved character which was imprinted on it. It is a fact not without significance, that the novel, which is really a mongrel species of poetry, was, after a long declension, raised into reputation by a distinguished poet, who turned to it after he had become wearied of treading the purer and more ambitious walks of his art. Indeed, the series of Scott's novels and romances did not open, until all the best poetry of his time had been produced: and, notwithstanding the extraordinary merit of those new efforts of his, their appearance, and the eagerness with which the example was emulated, might be accepted as tokens that the poetical light of the age was in its wane. By him above all, with two or three precursors and several not unworthy successors, the novel was made to be for us, in some respects almost all, in others more than all, that the drama in its palmy summer had been for our forefathers; imbibing as much of the poetic spirit as its prose form and mixed purpose allowed; and aiming, in all the best instances, at presenting a picture, alike faithful to nature, and manly and thoughtful in its views of human life.

In the beginning of the present century was founded the dynasty of the Reviews. These receptacles of miscellaneous discussion, though they had employed skilful pens for fifty years before, had been treated merely as task-work by their concoctors. They now began to be chosen by preference, as the vehicles of the best prose writing, and the most energetic thinking, which the nation could command. It is surprising to mark what masses of valuable knowledge have been laid up, what streams of eloquence have been poured out, in the periodicals of our century, by authors who, instead of caring for so much as present notoriety, have oftenest left their names to be guessed at. The best writers of the time, with hardly an exception, have given us many such anonymous papers; and there are several whose services, no mean ones either, have hardly been rendered in any other shape. Our periodical writers



have not escaped without hurt, though some of them with less than might have been expected, from either of two risks, to which this way of communication is imminently exposed. First, it is unfavourable both to completeness and to depth of knowledge. The patient meditation of the sage will hardly be expected to show itself, in these hasty effusions on topics which are often quite temporary. Yet it is with surprise that we read in the leading periodicals, not only much that is ingenious and novel, but a very great deal which is far from being shallow, and not a little that is really profound. Secondly, periodical writing tempts strongly to exaggeration, both of style and of sentiment. Something of this is perceptible among our very best writers who have been much accustomed to the making up of striking papers in reviews and magazines: and the evil has worked on the mass of inferior contributors, with a force which has seriously injured the purity of the public taste.

It would be impossible, within any reasonable bounds, to name all the departments of knowledge to which contributions have been made by our periodical writers. No field has been left untouched; and many have been cultivated with great success. But it cannot be doubted that the strong points have been two: the Criticism of Literary Works, especially poetry; and speculation in Social and Political Philosophy. Treated well in some separate books, these have nowhere been handled so skilfully as in the Reviews. They are, after poetry, the most valuable departments in the literature of our first age.

4. It is a fact which we have not overlooked in the progress of our studies, that, in no period since the Anglo-Saxon, has our national literature failed to derive much, both of its materials and of its inspiration, from the teaching of other countries. France, which manned the advanced guard of civilisation in the middle ages, furnished then, as we have learned, the models of our chivalrous poetry, with much of our social system. The Augustan age of French letters, again, that is, the reign of Louis the Fourteenth, ruled our literary tastes from the Restoration till the middle of the eighteenth century.

From Germany, much more than from any other foreign nation, have come the influences by which the intellect of Great Britain has been affected during the century we live in. But, in regard to its first age, the amount of that influence is sometimes overrated. There is no good reason for supposing that the poetry of that time was at all essentially indebted to such sources. Scott, knowing really little about German poetry, and merely borrowing one or two ideas from Goethe, was of a spirit totally alien to that of the



meditative Teutons; which, however, did work on Coleridge strongly, on Wordsworth in some degree, and much more (through them) on one or two of the younger poets. But in poetry the effects were really trifling: and it was only after the first twenty years of the century, that German literature began to be known to any but a very few recluse and uninfluential scholars.

The case has been widely different during the thirty years which lie nearest to ourselves. The study and translation of the literature of Germany have become fashionable pursuits: our poems bear unequivocal symptoms of the epidemic; and the semi-philosophy of our magazines is full of it. With all this, it has been, on the whole, highly beneficial, especially in familiarizing us with a national cast of mind which is strikingly unlike ours, and which therefore is fit, if rightly used, to show us where lie our national weaknesses. The philology of Germany has taught us very much: its poetical criticism, far more profound than ours, may, when we have learned to understand it, teach us still more. The philosophical stamp which has sunk so deeply into the theology of Germany, has engaged the anxious attention of our teachers of religion, working effects, both for evil and for good, which it would be rash in this place to attempt to estimate. Not altogether without its risks, yet decidedly tending to elevate the standard of abstract speculation among us, has been that accurate study of the highest branches of German philosophy, which has been prosecuted by a few of our most systematic thinkers, in paths not leading directly to theological conclusions.

5. The circumstances last noted have already led us to take account of the Second of the Stages, into which the present century has been divided. It has now endured for twenty-two years.

The hesitation which every one must feel in endeavouring to estimate the literary character of the generation immediately before his own, becomes more decided when we pass to that in the midst of which we live. From the particulars which will soon be given, readers may form, each for himself, some opinion as to the merit and probable effects of the intellectual exertions that are going on so actively around us. Very few suggestions can safely be offered here, in anticipation of the judgments which will thus be arrived at.

By far the most hopeful symptom, which our most recent literature has shown, is to be found in the zeal and success with which its teaching has been extended beyond the accustomed limits. Knowledge, though still leaving unvisited many regions that are alarmingly dark, has been diffused with a rapidity never before dreamt of: the sphere of letters has been widened, beneficially in respect of clearness if not in respect of profundity, by the consideration which

has been had of the widening circle of persons to be instructed : and the spirit which prompts the lessons has, in many instances, been worthily embodied in the enlarged and enlightened temper with which they have been communicated. In the midst of much light-mindedness and error, and in spite of eager discussions, alike on questions religious, ecclesiastical, and social, we may persuade ourselves that many features are prominent, presaging the birth of a love of mankind more expansive and generous than any that has ever yet pervaded society.

We possess no poetry comparable to that of the last generation ; and, with a vast quantity of prose-writing that may not unreasonably be called eloquent, we have very few men that remarkably unite eloquence with power of thought. Among our thinkers there is, beyond doubt, a greater activity of speculation, in regard to questions affecting the nature and destiny of man, than that which prevailed in the preceding section of the century : but, with rare exceptions, the service done has been rather that of boldly propounding problems which it is desirable to solve, than that of finding true and available solutions. We are struggling, amidst much of doubt and dimness, towards a new organization of social and intellectual life.

When we view the eager spirit of questioning, the unassuaged thirst for action, by which society is ruled, our contemplation of the scene cannot be put to better profit than in the humble thankfulness with which it prompts us to remember, that, among us, more favoured than many of our brethren, those restless impulses have never yet been permitted to destroy social quiet, or to drown the peaceful voice with which Literature speaks, as the worthiest organ of human thought and desire and will. The novel ideas and aspirations, which resound through Europe, like the blast of a trumpet summoning all men to battle, have in our land been so guided, by higher power than ours, as to seek their development by no force but that of honest conviction, through no agency but that of unfettered writing and speech. We, like our fathers, gazing with deep anxiety, have gazed also with unbroken safety, on that wild conflict of opinions, which elsewhere has overthrown, again and again, thrones, and liberty, and faith. The tempest has, as we may venture to believe, cleared away some dangerous elements from the air we breathe ; and the bolt which was charged with its terrors has fallen on other homes than ours.

## CHAPTER XIV.

## THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.

## SECTION SECOND : THE POETRY OF THE FIRST AGE.

A. D. 1800—A. D. 1830.

George III.....1800-1820.  
 George IV.....1820-1830.

1. First Group of Leading Poets—Campbell.—2. Southey.—3. Second Group—Scott and Byron.—4. Scott's Characteristics and Works.—5. Byron's Characteristics, Ethical and Poetical.—6. Third Group—Coleridge and Wordsworth—Coleridge's Genius and Works.—7. Wordsworth—Features of his Poetical Character.—8. Wordsworth—His Poetical Theory—Its Effect on his Works.—9. Fourth Group—Wilson—Shelley—Keats.—10. Crabbe and Moore—Dramatic Poems—Miscellaneous Names—Sacred Poetry.

1. In the illustrious band of poets, who enriched the literature of our language during the first generation of the present century, there are four who have gained greater fame than any others, and exercised greater influence on their contemporaries. These are, Wordsworth and Coleridge, Scott and Byron; and they, although each is individually unlike all the rest, might yet, in respect of their ruling spirit and tendencies, be classed in pairs as they have now been named. Others, however, are hardly less distinguished: and all whose works call for exact scrutiny may conveniently be distributed in Four Groups.

In the first of these stand Thomas Campbell and Robert Southey, writers very dissimilar to each other, but differing as widely from all their contemporaries.

*b. 1777. }* We should hardly expect that the character of Campbell's  
*d. 1844. }* works would have been other than it is, though he had begun his career thirty years earlier. His larger poems would have delighted all who loved the few pieces truly poetical which that time produced. But to no one living then, would it have occurred to hail him as the precursor of a new school; and no one living now would have wondered to see such compositions as his, succeeding

or accompanying those of Goldsmith and Gray. He employed, as they did, an unusually delicate taste, in elaborating his verses, both in diction and melody, with the minute care of execution which had been an orthodox requirement since the days of Queen Anne; and to the descriptive poems of the former of the two his earliest and best work bore a likeness in tone, though it was more vigorous in fancy and less so in reflection. In narrative, Campbell is, at the best, slow and unimpressive: quick sympathy with energetic action is scarcely traceable, unless in the flashes of enthusiasm which light up his martial odes; and even of these fine lyrics there is not one, perhaps, into which there does not intrude some heavy or feeble phrase, a token that the flame is flickering and growing dim.

It is a fact not without a meaning, that, while his "Pleasures of Hope" was written between youth and manhood, the "Gertrude of Wyoming," the latest of his productions that is worthy of him, had appeared before he was much past his thirtieth year. The reason may suggest itself if we remember, on how slender a thread of original or coherent thinking are strung the jewels of fancy and feeling, that make the charm of the earlier, which is also by much the more vigorous, of the two poems. Not only does it fail to redeem the promise of its title; but its beautiful descriptions, and its reflections and sentiments, (often deeply touching, but as often very trite,) are related to each other by no unity of purpose, or by none but such as depends on the most casual and indistinct associations. His mind, deficient in manly vigour of thought, had worked itself out in the first few bursts of youthful emotion. But no one has clothed, with more of romantic sweetness, the feelings and fancies which people the fairy-land of early dreams; and no one has thrown around the enchanted region a purer atmosphere of moral contemplation.

b. 1774. } 2. Southey, with an ethical tone higher and sterner than  
d. 1843. } Campbell's, offers in every other feature a marked contrast to him. He is rough and careless in working up details: he indulges in no poetical reveries, and scorns everything approaching to sentimentalism: he throws off rapid sketches of human action, embellished with great pomp of external imagery, interesting through grandeur and seriousness of feeling, and seldom touching the key of the pathetic. In much of this, he is the man of his own age: but he is above his age in one view, in respect of which he has not received justice. Writing narrative poetry before any of his celebrated contemporaries had entered the ground, he stood solitary among them to the last: the only poet of his day who strove to



emulate the great masters of epic song ; the only one who took pains to give his works external symmetry of plan ; the only one who attempted bestowing on a poem an internal unity, by making it the representative of one leading idea. This, it must firmly be maintained, is a loftier and worthier theory of poetic art, than that which ruled the irregular outbursts of Scott and Byron. But it may be that the aspiration was too ambitious for the time : it was certainly far above the competency of the aspirer. The reflective skill of the artist was insufficiently supported by the native temperament of the poet. Southey wanted spontaneous depth of sympathy : his emotion has the steady and measured flow of the artificial canal, not the leaping gush of the river in its self-worn channel. His imagination, likewise, is full and picturesque, rather than original : he could elaborate fine images out of objects whose poetical relations are obvious ; but he was not gifted with the strong and exquisite sense, which discerns poetical elements in things seemingly unpoetical.

In two of his three best poems, he has imitated his epic models in a fashion which cools all but highly imaginative readers. He has founded the interest mainly on supernatural agency, and that of a kind which not only is obscure to most of us, but cannot command so much as a momentary belief of reality. The novelty which he desired to gain is purchased at an extravagant price : the splendid panoramas pass away like the figures of a magic lantern. In his Arabian tale, "Thalaba the Destroyer," we are placed amidst the array of striking superstitions which surrounds the Deism of Mahomet : and the scattered rays of truth and goodness, which twinkle through the darkness of the false creed, are concentrated in a series of scenes, whose moral dignity of thought, and solemn portraiture of conscientious self-sacrifice, cannot fail to impress us vividly ; if only we are able to make ourselves at home among the witches and talismans, the fallen angels who haunt the ruins of Babylon, and the gigantic brood of sorcerers who fill the lurid caverns stretching under the roots of the ocean. "The Curse of Kehama," relating a story yet more touching, and adorned with passages of great tenderness, tries us still more severely, by seeking to interest us in the monstrous and mischievous fables of the Hindoo mythology. The supernatural machinery, and the bold use of the lyrical metres, are alike abandoned in the blank-verse epic, "Roderick, the Last of the Goths." It is much to be regretted that the choice of a story, containing circumstances irremediably revolting, should deform this noble poem, which is otherwise the fairest proof the author has given of the practicability of his enlightened poetic theory.



3. Our second group of poets will, (unless Moore ought to find a place in it,) contain only Sir Walter Scott and Lord Byron, who were in succession the most popular of all, and owed their popularity mainly to characteristics which they had in common.

They are distinctively the poets of active life. They portray, in spirited narrative, idealized resemblances of the scenes of reality; events which arise out of the universal relations of society, hopes and fears and wishes which are open to the consciousness of all mankind. Were it not for some higher flights which Byron took, inspired from without rather than from within, we might say of them, without exception, what is true of him generally; that they neither aspired to the praise of wedding poetry with abstract thought, nor ascended into those secluded walks of fanciful musing, in which none delight but minds very finely toned.

Both of them have described some of their works as tales; and it has been said of Scott, while it might with not less truth have been said of Byron, that his works are romances in verse. It is unquestionable, that they have neither the elevation nor the regularity belonging to the highest kind of narrative poetry; and, while the poems of the one are in many points strikingly analogous to his own historical novels, those of the other often derive their popular attractiveness from sources of interest nearly akin to that which prevails in less worthy works of fiction.

But the model of both poets was something different from the regular epic; and, if there must be a comparison, the standard is to be sought elsewhere. Scott, fondly attached to the early literature of the land, began his authorship, in "The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border," with the republication and imitation of ancient ballads; and he avowedly designed his poems as restorations, with changes suited to modern tastes, of a very interesting class of poems with which he was not less familiar. His originals were the Romances of Chivalry; and, after the extraordinary success of his attempts at embodying the chivalrous and national idea, nothing was more natural than that the example should be applied, by Byron as well as by others, in the construction of narratives founded on a different kind of sentiments. The likeness to the old romances was completed by the adoption of their most usual measure, the couplet of lines in eight syllables or four accents. This metre, although long in use, had recently been held fit only for comic rhyming or lyrics: a poet of Johnson's time would no more have thought of using it for a long and serious narrative, than of choosing the common measure of the psalms. But it is not to be forgotten that the idea of imitating the romances, as

well as the use of their metre and the accentual way of treating it, belongs really to Coleridge, whose "Christabel" was the immediate model of Scott's earliest tale.

It was to be expected, and it was right, that compositions of this sort, executed admirably by both writers, should gain extensive popularity. It may be that the audience was the larger, because no heavy demand was made on them for reflection or fine feeling. But the public, in preferring narrative poems to philosophical ones, were unwittingly affirming a sound critical principle. On the other hand, it was not to be wondered at, though both of the poets themselves flagged and grew weary, in treading again and again so narrow a round. It was in the course of things that Scott, finding in his first field no scope for some of his best and strongest powers, should turn aside to lavish these without hindrance on his prose romances. It was in the course of things that Byron, as his knowledge grew and his meditations became deeper, should rise from Turkish tales to the later cantos of *Childe Harold*.

b. 1771. } 4. We shall neither rate Scott's originality high enough,  
 d. 1832. } nor perceive exactly how it was that his poems became so popular, unless we remember that he was the earliest adventurer in a region hitherto unknown; and that, on his first appearance, he stood, in the eye of the world at large, quite unaccompanied. It was another key that had been struck in "The Pleasures of Hope:" "Thalaba" had been published, only to be neglected: and "Christabel," though already written, was known but to a few men of letters. No note of preparation had been sounded unless by Scott's own "Minstrelsy," when, in 1805, he broke in on the public with his series of poetical narratives. In these he appealed to national sympathies through ennobling historic recollections; he painted the externals of scenery and manners with unrivalled picturesqueness; he embellished with an infectious enthusiasm all that was generous and brave in the world of chivalry; and he seldom forgot to dress out the antique in so much of modern trappings, as might make it both intelligible and interesting. "The Lay of the Last Minstrel," really, as he himself called it, "a romance of border-chivalry, in a light-horseman sort of stanza," has not only a more continuous fervour and a more consistent unity than its successors, but is more faithful to the character of its ancient models: and it is faithful to them without injury to the interest of the poem with modern readers, in almost all points except its use of the supernatural, which is exceedingly clumsy. "Marmion" is otherwise designed: it seeks to combine the chivalrous romance with the metrical chronicle; a union neither impossible nor without old precedent, but here very far from being

well-executed. The blot by which the work is most deeply defaced, was pointed out, on its appearance, in a famous criticism which gave much offence to the poet. It lies in the degradation of the nominal hero, and in the every-day and prosaic nature of some of the offences he is made to commit. But the poem abounds in very striking passages: the battle of Flodden is especially grand. "There is," says the author of the critique just referred to, "a flight of five or six hundred lines, in which he never stoops his wing or wavers in his course; but carries the reader forward with a more rapid, sustained, and lofty movement, than any epic bard we can at present remember." \* "The Lady of the Lake" is more original in conception: it is a kind of romantic pastoral: and a good deal of vagueness, both in character and in narrative, is hidden from us by the charm of its magnificent landscapes, and the cheerful airiness of the sentiment and adventures. "Rokeby" is a Waverly novel in verse, without the liveliness, but overflowing with couplets poetically pointed: and "The Lord of the Isles" is hardly more than a spirited metrical chronicle, deserving, in the circumstances, infinitely less praise than its model, the "Bruce" of Barbour. It may be through an oddity of taste, that some of us seem to perceive a new blazing up of the ancient spirit, in those wild and irregular sketches of Scandinavian and chivalrous superstitions, which are contained in "Harold the Dauntless" and "The Bridal of Triermain." Published anonymously, as the writer's first experiment of the kind, they were supposed to be imitations, and suffered a neglect which confirmed Scott's intention of deserting composition in verse: and the preponderance of the supernatural machinery in the stories of both must always prevent them from being generally agreeable or interesting. But nowhere does the poet seem more at home, than in the romantic scenes which he there painted.

b. 1788. } 5. The moral faults of Byron's poetry became, unfortu-  
 z. 1824. } nately, more glaring as he grew older. Starting with the  
 carelessness of ill-trained youth in regard to some of the most serious of all truths, he provoked censure without scruple, and was censured not without caprice: and thus, being placed speedily in a dangerous and false position, he hardened himself into a contempt for the most sacred laws of society, or at least made a point of professing such contempt in his later writings. The closing scenes of his short life give reason for a belief, that purer and more elevated views were beginning to dawn on his mind: but he died before the amendment had found its way into his literary efforts.

\* Lord Jeffrey: Contributions to the Edinburgh Review.

His wanton disregard for the distinction between right and wrong is nowhere paraded so obtrusively, as in one of his last works, which is also the most decisive proof of his genius; a work, indeed, in which his poetical powers appeared not so properly to have reached maturity, as to show a new and wider development. But his earlier poems themselves, which are in the hands of every one, cannot be named to the young without a word of warning. From Scott, it is true, we receive no lofty lessons of morality: but with him no great law of ethics is set at nought. His brilliant rival endeavours assiduously to inculcate lessons which are positively bad. The root of his delinquency is laid bare by one of the ablest as well as most friendly of his critics. It did not consist in his continually choosing for representation scenes of violent passion and guilty horror: it lay deeper than in his theatrical fondness for identifying himself with his misanthropes, and pirates, and seducers. These were ethical faults, as well as poetical errors: but he sinned more grievously still, against morality as against possibility, by mixing up, incessantly, in one and the same character, the utmost extremes of virtue and vice, of generosity and ferocity, of lofty heroism and sensual grossness. "It is still worse when he proceeds to show, that all these precious gifts, of dauntless courage, strong affection, and high imagination, are not only akin to guilt, but the parents of misery; and that those only have any chance of tranquillity or happiness in this world, whom it is the object of his poetry to make us shun and despise." \*

Thus equivocal, or worse than equivocal, as a teacher, in his practice of an art which cannot but teach indirectly through its excitement of the imagination, Byron fixes his suggestive pictures with an extraordinary impressiveness. Narrow in his range of thought, and very often really commonplace in its results; monotonously gloomy in his models of character, and never able to pass a step beyond the self-drawn circle; and stooping frequently to seek for sources of excitement among the very dregs of human nature: he yet, by a rare union of faculties, vindicates his poetic power over the very readers who struggle against it. He excelled all the poets of his time, beyond the reach of comparison, in impassioned strength, varying from vehemence to pathos: he was excelled by very few of them in his fine sense of the beautiful: and his combination of passion with beauty, standing unapproached in his own day, has hardly ever been surpassed. His originality, likewise, is great, though attained in an odd way. In his tales he modelled freely after Cole-

\* Lord Jeffrey: Contributions to the Edinburgh Review.



ridge and Scott: and it would be difficult to say how very much the Pilgrimage owes to Wordsworth. But he did not borrow as the mocking-bird, merely repeating the notes; nor yet as the inventive musician, who draws out admirable variations from a given air: he rather resembles one who watches a few striking movements from a half-heard strain of distant music, and constructs on these a melody which is all his own.

His Tales, though they contain some of his most beautiful passages, yet, except *Parisina* and *The Prisoner of Chillon*, rise seldomer than his other poems into that flow of poetic imagery, prompted by the loveliness of nature, which he had attempted in the first two Cantos of *Childe Harold*, and poured forth with added fulness of thought and emotion in the last two. *Manfred*, however, with all its shortcomings, is perhaps the work which most adequately shows his poetical temperament. And the Tragedies, though not worthy of the poet, are, of all his works, those which do most honour to the man.

6. We pass to the third section in our honoured file of poets. In it are written the names of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and William Wordsworth; men endowed pre-eminently with the distinctive elements of poetry, and communicating to their contemporaries an impulse which, sooner or later, was decisively paramount. Neither of them gained, or used the means of gaining, the general popularity, which followed Scott's tales of battle and adventure, and Byron's melodramatic mysteries. They are characteristically the poets of imagination, of reflection, and of a tone of sentiment, which, whatever may have been their own aim, owes its attraction to its ideal elevation. Admired and emulated by a few zealous students, Coleridge may be said to have virtually become the poetical leader from the very beginning of his age; and effects yet wider have since been worked by the extended study of Wordsworth.

*b. 1772.* } We cannot err in regarding Coleridge as the most origi-  
*d. 1834.* } nal among the poets of his very original time: and, with all drawbacks, he may as safely be ranked among the most original of its thinkers; a fact bearing, at more points than one, on his poetical character. The fragmentary lyrical dreams which visited him in his happiest moods of inspiration are unequalled in our language, perhaps not equalled in any other, for their overflowing affluence of imagery, so solemnly and deeply meditative, so purely and romantically beautiful, and suggesting, with such intensity and variety, trains of novel thought and of touching emotion. His most frequent tone of feeling is very peculiar, but hardly describable. It is a kind of romantic tenderness or melancholy, often solemnized



by an intense access of profound awe. This fine passion is never breathed out so finely, as when it is associated with some of his airy glimpses of external nature: in these it colours every one of the forms which possessed his teeming fantasy. Nor is his power of suggestive sketching more extraordinary than his immaculate taste and nervous precision of language. His images are often obscure, and as often owe their beauty to the moonlight haze in which they float: they are very seldom obscure through faults of diction, and never degraded through such faults.

It would be impossible for any one, except another Coleridge, to say what would have been the character, or what the merit, of any great work which Coleridge might have executed. But it is disappointing to remember that this gifted man did execute nothing more than fragments. His life ebbed away in the dangerous happiness of contemplating undertakings still to be achieved. His fault was hardly to be called indolence, but rather an habitual weakness of will. The most powerful of all his works, the romance of "Christabel," the prompter both of Scott and of Byron, was thrown aside when scarce begun, and stands as an interrupted vision of mysterious adventures and strange horrors, clothed in the most exquisite and appropriate fancies. His tragedy of "Remorse" is full of poetic pictures, which are very fine, though not so characteristic as many others which he designed. In "The Ancient Mariner," if anywhere, he has learned from Wordsworth, and not to his profit. The idea of calling up all its awful pageantry of evil to punish the thoughtless slaughter of a bird, teaches, no doubt, a good moral lesson, but involves a puerility which is not redeemed by the foundation it has in the superstitions of the sailor: and the incongruity between the cause and the consequence concurs with the profuse introduction of the supernatural, in injuring the effect of this most suggestive and original composition.

If one were condemned to forget all Coleridge's poems except a few, there are perhaps three that would best keep in mind the varieties of his genius. The highly poetical "Ode to the Departing Year" shows his force of thought and moral earnestness: "Kubla Khan," which is literally the record of a dream, represents, in its gorgeous incoherence, his singular power of lighting up landscapes with thrilling fancies; and "The Dark Lady" is one of the most tender and romantic love-poems ever framed.

b. 1770. } 7. The name of Wordsworth cannot be pronounced with-  
 d. 1850. } out an admiration and respect not easily to be chilled, but  
 a little apt to be so by the reaction which ensues, when all bounds  
 are overleaped by his indiscriminating eulogists. A prodigality of

praise, not justly due even to Milton, has been heaped on him during the last few years of his life, and ever since. Yet this overdone reverence for a man of great genius and far-reaching views, a lover of mankind, and a reformer in poetical art, is an error of a generous and pleasing kind, and might be passed over silently were not the seeking after truth a duty in all things. It is a whimsical sequence to the neglect and ridicule which he long suffered; the former arising inevitably for a time out of the character of his works, and the latter being (it must be said) merited by eccentricities both of taste and judgment, such as never perhaps deformed any other poems of equal merit.

The most obvious feature in Wordsworth is the intense and unwearied delight which he takes in all the shapes and appearances of rural and mountain scenery. He is carried away by a rapture truly passionate, when he broods over the grandeur and loveliness of the earth and air: his verse lingers with a fond reluctance to depart, and dwells again with pleased repetition and return, on the wild flower, or the misty lake, or the sound of the wailing blast, or the gleam of sunshine breaking through the passes among the hills: and the thoughts and feelings, for the suggestion of which these objects are cherished, flow forth with an abstracted enthusiasm of expression, which, in a man less pious and rational, might be interpreted as a raising of the inanimate world to a level with human dignity and intelligence. Many of the analogies involved in such descriptions of his, are among the most originally and poetically conceived, and the most exquisitely apt in diction, of all metrical passages in our language. The tone which prevails, again, in his contemplation of mortal act and suffering, is a serene seriousness, on which there never breaks in any thing rightly to be called passion. Yet it often rises, especially in religious musing, into an intensely solemn awe, and is not less often relieved by touches of a quiet pathos. In learning what are the poet's feelings, we have learned what are those of his personages when he introduces any: for, while the delineation of character is not the strong point with any of our recent poets, none of them, not Byron himself, has had so thorough an incapacity as Wordsworth of throwing himself dramatically into the conception of characters different from his own. With this unimpassioned temperament, and this self-absorbed rigidity, he cannot but fail in narrating events with spirit: nothing can be heavier than his sustained attempts at narrative, such as those which, interspersed with fine meditation and fancy, make up the staple in "The White Doe of Rylstone." But the attempt is seldom made. Almost all his poems might be called, as he has himself called one sec-

tion of them, "poems of sentiment and reflection." They are lyrical, descriptive, or didactic, or a union of the three; and his own ambition was that of being, in all that he did, worthy of being honoured as a philosophical poet. Few have so well deserved the name as he has, by the labours of a studious and reflective lifetime, devoted with conscientious ardour to the service of poetic art, and to the teaching, through picture and feeling, of lessons ministering to the happiness and virtue of mankind. His unceasing sympathy with the everyday interests of life, while it has produced some of his faults, has brought out his greatest strength both of thought and of invention: and nowhere is he more energetic or more truly poetical, than when he is sedulously occupied in obeying his own maxim, that "poetry is most just to its divine origin, when it administers the comforts and breathes the spirit of religion."

8. It is not surprising that a man like Wordsworth, living and meditating in seclusion, should have constructed his works, or persuaded himself that he constructed them, in obedience to a systematic theory of poetical art. But we might not easily have inferred, from the works themselves, what the theory was. He has ventured on the hazardous step of informing us: and, while a study of his declared æsthetical principles is one of the most instructive employments in which mature students of literature could engage, one or two points require attention from all who would rightly estimate his poems.

Nothing can be better than his leading doctrines, especially the law on which he so anxiously insists, that all poetry is laid under "a necessity of producing immediate pleasure;" or that, as he otherwise phrases it, "the end of poetry is to produce excitement in co-existence with an overbalance of pleasure." This great theorem, although now perhaps it is seldom disputed in words, is yet so apt to be misunderstood or forgotten, that it cannot be pondered too carefully. The enunciation of it comes with especial force from the lips of a philosophical poet, who aimed undeviatingly at causing poetry to become, by every method consistent with the observance of the primary rule, the instructor and refiner of the noblest faculties of man's nature. Not less valuable are the specifications and corollaries with which the central truth is fenced and illustrated. There is greater room for controversy in some of those views which were first proposed by the writer himself, and to which he was led by a just scorn for the endeavours, current among the weaker pupils in the school of Pope, to manufacture poetry by mere skill in the choice and collocation of words. He was thus tempted, in the furthest step of his reasoning, to something not unlike the very equivocal

assertion, that the poet's function is limited to an exact representation of the natural and real; a heresy which his own best pieces of verse triumphantly refute. In detail, however, he sought to make this rule operative by a choice, both of subjects and of diction, which, it must reluctantly be confessed, issued too often in nothing better than triviality and meanness. This paradoxical opinion of his, his grave self-esteem, and the peculiarities of thinking and sentiment arising out of a secluded and meditative life, co-operated in making him deliberately present to us many passages, and some entire poems, which it is really difficult to read with seriousness. Still oftener they gave birth to thoughts and expressions, which, like eccentricities in conduct, seem, in the mass, absurd to a large majority of men; but each of which, when regarded by itself, strikes an answering chord in the breasts of many, who share more or less in the unusual habit or taste that dictated it.

It is thus that opinions so diverse have been caused, and the feelings of different readers so diversely affected, by his early works the "Lyrical Ballads," and by others of the same cast. There is hardly one of these, along which there does not glance some brilliant ray of poetic light: but, even in those throughout which the ethereal illumination is purest and most steady, shadows flit intrusively across, sometimes offending the eyes of all, at other times not perceptible to those who are accustomed to them. It would probably be impossible to name any of those smaller poems, which would not be pronounced and felt by many readers to possess faultless beauty, and by many others to have their beauty irretrievably marred by some of the characteristic blemishes. It may be enough to cite, as instances, the pastoral ballad of "The Pet-Lamb," the solemn "Thanksgiving Ode," and even "The Thorn." The lovely "Ruth" herself, and "The Seven Sisters," do not pass uncensured. The three poems on "Yarrow," and some of the larger ones, would perhaps be more fortunate, though really less fine: and the adoption of the longer forms of metre, such as the ten-syllabled rhymes, or the heroic blank-verse, acts on the poet, almost uniformly, as a spell which exorcises all oddity and affectation. "Laodamia" and "Dion" are classical gems without a flaw: and many of the Sonnets unite original thought, poetic vividness, and symmetry of parts, with a perfection hardly to be surpassed. Above all, "The Excursion" rolls on its thousands of blank-verse lines with the soul-felt harmony of a divine hymn, pealed forth from a cathedral-organ. We forget the insignificance and want of interest characterizing the plan, which embraces nothing but a three days' walk among the mountains: we refuse to be aroused from our trance of



meditative pleasure by the occasional tediousness of dissertation: and we are startled but for a moment by the poet's repeated demand on us, to regard this as only one part of a gigantic philosophical poem. In that vast undertaking were to be included "The Prelude" and the portions unpublished at the time of his death; and the completion of it was superseded only by the incorporation of many of its materials in his other works. The *Excursion* abounds in verses and phrases which, once heard, are never forgotten: and it contains not a few long trains of poetical musing, through which the poet moves with a majestic fulness of reflection and imagination, not paralleled, by very far, in any thing else of which our century can boast.

9. John Wilson, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and John Keats, make up our fourth poetical group. They are placed together as bearing, in essentials, a likeness to Coleridge and Wordsworth rather than to others.

b. 1788. The poetry of Professor Wilson is in its substance the voice of imagination and sentiment, with an under-current of reflection, which seems as if it were kept down by an apprehensive intuition of its possible incongruity with the elements that are predominant. In form, his principal works depart from that to which he might have been expected to incline. "The Isle of Palms" is a narrative romance of shipwreck and island-solitude, full of rich pictures and delicate pathos, and treating the short stanza of Coleridge and Scott with very ingenious varieties of melody. "The City of the Plague" is a series of dramatic scenes, representing, with very great depth of emotion, a domestic tragedy from the Plague of London. Both in the warm love of nature, and in the ruling tone of feeling, Wilson is more like to Wordsworth than to any other of his contemporaries: but no poet ever admired another with such reverence, yet imitated him so very little. There prevail, everywhere, an airiness and delicacy of conception which are very fascinating; and the tender sweetness of expression is often wonderfully touching. Everywhere there arises the impression that these works, the effusions of early manhood, were imperfect embodiments of a strength that lurked within, and which might yet, like the hidden endowments of Scott, find in prose a freer outlet.

It is sad, though not equally sad, to contemplate the fate of the other two who have been named. Shelley, the victim of a wayward perverseness contrasting painfully with his natural gentleness of disposition, fancied himself an Atheist in his seventeenth year, and made himself a martyr to a chimera, through which he insisted on wanting such companionship and teaching as would



have fortified and enlightened alike his moral being and his intellect. Keats poured forth with extraordinary power the dreams of his immature youth, and died with the belief that the radiant forms had been seen in vain. In native felicity of poetic endowment, embracing both wealth of imagination and warmth of susceptibility to the beautiful, it is hardly too much to say that these two were the first minds of their time. But the inadequacy of their performance to their poetic faculties shows, as strikingly as any thing could, how needful, towards the production of effective poetry, is a substratum of solid thought, of practical sense, and of manly and extensive sympathy.

b. 1792. } Never did any man revel more than Shelley in the warm  
d. 1822. } transports of true poetic vision. If we would readily apprehend the fulness and fineness of his powers, without remaining ignorant of his weakness, we might study either of two pieces : the lyrical drama "Prometheus Unbound," a marvellous gallery of dazzling images and wildly touching sentiments ; or the "Alastor," a scene in which the melancholy quiet of solitude is visited but by the despairing poet who lies down to die. We want, everywhere, two requisites of poetry really good. We want sympathy with ordinary and universal feelings ; instead of which we find warmth seldom shown but for the unreal or the abstract, or when the poet's own unrest prompts, as in the "Stanzas written near Naples," a strain of lamentation which sounds like a passionate sigh. Again, we want clearness of thinking, and find, instead of it, an indistinctness which sometimes amounts to the unintelligible : in his most ambitious poem, the narrative called "The Revolt of Islam," it is often difficult to apprehend so much as the outline of the story.

b. 1796. } It is impossible to say what Keats might have been, had he  
d. 1820. } lived to become rightly acquainted with himself and with mankind. But never did any youthful poet exhibit a more thorough possession of those faculties that are the foundation on which genius rests. It was said of his "Endymion," most truly, that no book could more aptly be used as a test, to determine whether a reader has a genuine love for poetry : and the intensity of the poetic spirit is not less in others of his poems. His works have no interest of story, no insight into human nature, no clear sequence of thought, no measure either in the colouring or the number of the conceptions : they are the rapturous voice of youthful fancy, luxuriating with deep delight in a world of beautiful unrealities.

10. When we were about to scrutinize the works of the two leaders in narrative poetry, a doubt was thrown out in regard to the position which should be assigned to Thomas Moore. The

b. 1754. } name of George Crabbe, likewise, has not yet been com-  
 d. 1832. } memorated. Both of these popular poets stand out promi-  
 nently enough to claim particular notice : yet it may be questioned  
 whether either of them is entitled to be ranked with those that  
 have already been reviewed. If we are positively to receive them  
 into the first order of their time, they might not only occupy the  
 extremes in date, but exemplify some of the strongest contrasts that  
 the age presented in respect of poetical character. The former was  
 too unreal to be a great poet : the latter failed by attaching himself  
 too closely to what was present and actual. Crabbe, beginning his  
 career among the writers of the eighteenth century, and nearly akin  
 to them in many features, might have begun our series. His *Metrical  
 Tales*, describing every-day life, are strikingly natural, and some-  
 times very touching : but they are elevated by nothing of ideality,  
 b. 1780. } and warmed by no kindling thoughts. Moore, one of the  
 d. 1851. } most popular of our poets, will long be remembered for his  
*Songs*, so melodious, so elegant in phrase, and wedding his grace-  
 ful sentiment so skilfully with glittering pictures. His fund of  
 imagery is inexhaustible : but his analogies are oftener ingenious  
 than poetical. He might be described, if we were to adopt a dis-  
 tinction often made of late, as having fancy rather than imagination.  
 His *Eastern Romances* in “ *Lalla Rookh*,” with all their occasional  
 felicities, are not powerful poetic narratives. Probably he is no-  
 where so successful as in his *Satirical effusions of Comic Rhyme* : for  
 in these his fanciful ideas are prompted by a wit so gaily sharp,  
 and expressed with a pointedness and neatness so very unusual,  
 that it is a pity these pieces should be condemned to speedy forget-  
 fulness, as they must be by the temporary interest of their topics.

Over the *Minor Poets* of that fruitful time, good as some of them  
 are, we have not time to linger. Two or three must be hastily  
 passed over, who might have deserved greater honour.

It would have been pleasant to do justice to the *Tragedies* of  
 Joanna Baillie. These, with all their faults as plays, are noble ad-  
 ditions to our literature, and the closest approach that has been  
 made in recent times to the merit of the old English drama. After  
 these, Coleridge’s tragedy having already been named, would come  
 the stately and imposing dramatic poems of Milman ; Maturin’s im-  
 passionate “ *Bertram* ;” and the finely conceived “ *Julian* ” of Miss  
 Mitford.

Samuel Rogers and William Lisle Bowles have given us much of  
 pleasing and reflective sentiment, accompanied with great refinement  
 of taste. To another and more modern school belong Bryan Proctor,  
 (better known by his assumed name of Barry Cornwall,) and Leigh

Hunt : the former the purer in taste, the latter the more original and inventive ; and both the authors of interesting and romantic poems. Walter Savage Landor could not be understood or fairly estimated without much detail. Some of his short lyrical and meditative pieces are very beautiful : his larger poems, both "Gebir," the "Hellenics," and the Dramas, sometimes delight but oftener puzzle us, by their occasional happiness of fancy and expression, their prevalent obscurity of thought, and their extraordinary want of constructive skill. The poems of Mrs Hemans breathe a singularly attractive tone of romantic and melancholy sweetness ; and, themselves owing large obligations to minds of greater originality, they have in their turn become the models, in sentiment, in phraseology, and in rhythm, for an incalculable number of pleasing sentimental verses. The ballads and songs of Hogg and Cunningham, some of which will not soon be forgotten, must merely be alluded to.

Nor can much more notice be bestowed on the Religious Poetry of the time. Except a few pieces which we have received from authors already named, it contains nothing of the very first order. The poems of Kirke White, all but posthumous, are more pleasing than original. There is much sweetness, but no great force, in the "Sabbath" of Grahame. By far the highest in this class is James Montgomery. He, besides some interesting poems of considerable bulk, narrative and descriptive, has written not a few pieces, devotional and meditative, which are among the best religious poems in our language. Pollok's "Course of Time," much over-lauded on its appearance, is the immature work of a man of genius who possessed very imperfect cultivation. It is clumsy in plan, tediously dissertative, and tastelessly magniloquent : but it has passages of good and genuine poetry. Mention may also be claimed by the agreeable verses of Bishop Heber, and by the more recent effusions of Keble.

## CHAPTER XV.

## THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.

## SECTION THIRD: THE PROSE OF THE FIRST AGE.

A. D. 1800—A. D. 1830.

1. Novels and Romances—The Waverley Novels—Minor Novelists.—2. Periodical Writing—The Edinburgh Review—The Quarterly Review—Blackwood's Magazine.—3. Criticism—The Essays of Francis Jeffrey.—4. Criticism and Miscellanies—Coleridge—Hazlitt—Lamb—Christopher North.—5. Social Science—Jeremy Bentham—Political Economy—History—Minor Historical Writers—Hallam's Historical Works.—6. Theology—Church History—Classical Learning—Scientific Theology—Practical Theology—John Foster—Robert Hall—Thomas Chalmers.—7. Speculative Philosophy—(1.) Metaphysics and Psychology—Dugald Stewart and Thomas Brown—(2.) Ethical Science—Mackintosh—Jeremy Bentham—(3.) The Theory of the Beautiful—Alison—Jeffrey—Stewart—Knight—Brown—Symptoms of Further Change.

1. AFTER the metrical works which adorned so eminently the period we are now studying, the next place belongs to the Novels and Romances in Prose, both for the kindred nature of the sorts of composition, and for the world-wide fame achieved in this field by Sir Walter Scott.

It had undergone, before he trode it, much of that purifying and elevation, of which symptoms were traceable in the last period we surveyed. In "Caleb Williams" and "Saint Leon," the strong but narrow mind of Godwin had sought to make the novel a vehicle for communicating peculiar social doctrines, with views of human life allied to the tragic. Miss Austen's scenes of every-day society had much merit for their cheerful reality, and their freedom from false sensibility. Miss Porter's "Scottish Chiefs," published before the earliest of Scott's historical romances, had the merit of first entering the ground, but occupied it very feebly. Above all, Miss Edgeworth, in her Irish Tales, showed how novel-readers may be at once interested and instructed, by acute and humorous common-

sense, not only unalloyed by tinsel sentimentality, but little warmed by lofty feeling of any kind.

In 1814, Scott published his novel "Waverley;" and the series, thenceforth carried on with surprising rapidity, attained from the beginning a popularity unexampled as well as fully-deserved. The Waverley novels have been excepted, by many very cautious judges, from the sentence which banishes most works of prose fiction from the libraries of the young. The exemption seems to be justified by two considerations. These are not mere love-stories, but pictures of human life, expressing broad and manly and practical views, and animated by sentiments which are cheerful and correct, if not very elevated or solemn; and, further, most of them exhibit history in a light which is extremely effective in exciting curiosity and interest, without degrading facts or characters to the sentimental level, or falsifying either of them beyond the lawful and necessary stretch of poetical embellishment.

This is no fit occasion for dwelling with close scrutiny on those celebrated works, or for endeavouring to analyze satisfactorily the sources of their power. They may safely be pronounced to be the most extraordinary productions of their class that ever were penned, and to stand, in literary value, as far above all other prose works of fiction, as the novels of Fielding stand above all others in our language except these. Nor need we pause over their usual looseness of plan, and their general carelessness and clumsiness of style, or animadvert on other faults which are perceptible to every reader. One point only may detain us for a moment: their felicitous union of familiar humour in the portraiture of characters, with force and skill in the excitement of all varieties of serious passion short of the most intense. It might be hinted, also, that the former of these elements is decidedly the stronger, and that the combination of the two is most successful where that tone is allowed to predominate. This is especially the case with the few earliest of the series, "Waverley," "Guy Mannering," and "The Antiquary," vigorous and easy portraits of society and manners in Scotland during the eighteenth century. "Ivanhoe," on the other hand, coming nearest of all to being a reproduction of one of the versified romances, and admirably spirited in its pictures of chivalry and warfare, is feeble in those comic scenes where the writer's strength naturally lay. When he put on again his knightly armour, its weight impeded the freedom of his movements.

Among the friends of Scott who followed him into the wilderness of fiction, was his son-in-law and biographer Lockhart, whose novels are very strong in their representations of tragic passion.



Such was also the variously-gifted Wilson, in whose "Lights and Shadows" the visionary loveliness of his poems shines out again, with even an increase of pathos, but still without free scope for those powers of sarcasm and humour, which, as we are not forbidden to believe, he has elsewhere proved. A very few other writers of the class must be hastily dismissed, and many altogether neglected. Extremes in the tone of thought and feeling are exhibited by the despondent imagination of Mrs Shelley, and the coarse and shrewd humour of Galt. The faculty of close observation possessed by the author of "Marriage," forms, in like manner, a contrast to the union of reflectiveness with pathos which gave so much interest to Hope's "Anastasius." To that time, also, rather than to the more recent, belong the delightful scenes which Miss Mitford has constructed by elaborately embellishing the facts of rural English life.

2. In beginning to look further around us on the prose literature which adorned the early part of our century, we are arrested by a class of works which embraces, in one way or another, all its departments.

No fact is more curious or important in the literary history of the age, than the prominence which was acquired in it by the leading Reviews, and by those periodicals which, bearing the name of Magazines, and thus opening their pages to poetry and to prose fiction, yet were successful also in dissertations like those which were the only contents of the others. None but those who know accurately what Reviews and Magazines were, fifty years ago, can judge how vast is the rise in literary merit; how wonderfully the compass of matter has been extended; and how incomparably the little-headed dicta of the older writers are exceeded in influence by the papers that appear in the modern periodicals, furnishing topics of talk or rules of thinking to the whole instructed community.

The high literary position of the periodicals was speedily secured, their combination of pure literature with political and social discussions settled, and their power founded beyond the possibility of overturn, by the earliest of the series, *The Edinburgh Review*. Commenced in 1802, it was placed, almost immediately, under the editorship of Francis Jeffrey, who conducted it till 1829.

In that earlier part of its history which is here in question, there were not very many distinguished men of letters in the empire that did not furnish something to its contents. At first it received aid from Sir Walter Scott, as well as from other famous persons who, like him, held Tory principles. But, becoming more and more decidedly the organ of the opposite party, and sometimes using very little reserve in its denunciations of those whom its con-

ductors held to be in the wrong, it came at length to be supported chiefly, though never quite exclusively, by writers who, while most of them were linked by private friendships, concurred likewise in political opinion. Among these were several eminent statesmen of the Whig party: such as Lord Brougham, so energetic both in speech and writing, and so various in his range of thought and knowledge; and Francis Horner, so universally honoured for the purity of his character, and for the masterly comprehensiveness of intellect which he brought to bear on public questions. John Allen discussed constitutional problems, with that combination of historical knowledge and mental power for which he was so distinguished: Malthus expounded the principles of political economy: Playfair made physical science both clear and interesting: the calm and dignified compositions of Mackintosh illustrated alike philosophy, and literature, and politics: and, in the papers contributed by Sydney Smith, one of the wittiest men of the day, the driest discussions became diverting, the liveliest ideas were extracted from the heaviest books, and inexhaustible showers of satirical raillery were discharged on the dullest opponents. Above all, the essays of the Editor, equally wonderful, in the circumstances, for their number, and the variety of their topics, for their grace and wit, their spirit and originality, rendered, both to the Review and to the world of letters, services which we must immediately endeavour to estimate somewhat more exactly.

The increasing differences of political creed, aggravated by some personal coolnesses, caused, in 1809, on the suggestion of Sir Walter Scott, the establishment of the Quarterly Review in London, designed to be, both in literature and politics, a counterpoise to the Scottish organ of the Whigs. William Gifford, previously known as an accomplished scholar and a vigorous satirical poet, edited it till 1824; soon after which his place was taken by the present editor, John Gibson Lockhart. The new Review was distinguished, from the beginning, by talent and knowledge fully justifying the high reputation it attained: and it numbered among its contributors not a few of the most famous and able men of the time. Both of its editors showed, in it as elsewhere, their full possession of the powers and accomplishments, qualifying them both to direct such a work, and to enrich it by writings of their own. Scott furnished to it some of the best of his dissertative and critical compositions: and Southey, one of the very best prose writers of our century, was a steady and invaluable coadjutor, discussing in its pages a great variety of themes. The statesman Canning found time to give some aid from his fund of brilliant wit and polished eloquence: and, owing some-

thing to the wit and learning of Frere, the Quarterly Review was indebted still more to qualities of the same sort possessed by the accomplished Ellis. Solid and valuable knowledge was communicated, embracing several departments, such as classics, in which its resources were peculiarly ample. Much, likewise, of that which it taught was imparted in a manner admirably calculated to make it both easily intelligible and generally attractive: a task which was nowhere perhaps executed better than in the geographical and other papers of Barrow.

The Westminster Review, set on foot in 1825, as the organ of Jeremy Bentham and his disciples, hardly falls within our period.

Blackwood's Magazine was begun in 1817, in the same political interest as the Quarterly Review. It is the only periodical of its class that here calls for notice. Unequal and very often careless, and in its youth petulant and severe beyond the worst offences of the Edinburgh Reviewers, it has contained articles of the highest literary merit, especially in criticism; while its form has allowed a variety from which the heavier periodicals were shut out. As to its contributions, during the first twelve or fifteen years of its career, it must suffice for us to learn, that the names of Wilson and Lockhart were connected with it by universal and uncontradicted belief. Two points regarding it should be remembered. It was the unflinching and idolatrous advocate of Wordsworth; and some of its writers were our first translators of German poetry, as well as the most active introducers of German taste and laws in poetical criticism.

3. Our best efforts in Literary Criticism, named already as one of the brightest spots in our recent literature, have been, with few exceptions, Essays in the Periodicals.

b. 1773. } Highest in the file stands the name of Francis Jeffrey,  
d. 1850. } whose history is an instance, without a parallel, of ceaseless mental activity and of rapid versatility in mental action. Practising an arduous profession with the greatest success, he, the first barrister of his court, was also the most celebrated periodical essayist of his time, a very remarkable thinker, and one of the best writers in the English language. Though we look no further than his four volumes of Essays selected for republication, we shall hardly find any branch of general knowledge untouched; and, treating none without throwing on it some ray of brilliant light, he has contributed to several of them truths which are alike valuable and original. His frequent depth of thought is disguised by the cheerful ripple which continually sparkles on the surface of the current: and his acuteness is marvellous, and incessantly awake. It hardly

falls within our province to notice his many Political Disquisitions, further than by saying, that their masterly reasoning, and their animation and clearness of exposition, concur in giving to their patriotic and courageous author one of the highest of all places among the literary advocates of the principles to which he so steadily adhered.

His Criticisms on Poetry are probably the best of his Essays in matter, as they are certainly the most eloquently written. They are always flowing and spirited, glittering with a gay wit and an ever-ready fancy: they very often blossom into exquisite felicities of diction; and, in many passages, he speaks with the voice of one who was himself almost a poet. Indeed his poetical susceptibility, and his love of the beautiful in art as well as nature, had an intensity very seldom co-existing with such keenness of the analytic faculties. His sensitiveness of feeling was nourished by an extraordinary aptitude for associating ideas; and this power, again, had been strengthened by much meditation, the fruits of which, in his Essay on Beauty, entitle him to a place in the history of our recent philosophy. His writings, especially the critical, are beautifully rich in the suggestion of moral ideas: and he is most fully entitled to advance the claim he did, "of having constantly endeavoured to combine ethical precepts with literary criticism, and earnestly sought to impress his readers with a sense both of the close connexion between sound intellectual attainments and the higher elements of duty and enjoyment, and of the just and ultimate subordination of the former to the latter."

Lastly, however, those admirable criticisms are properly critical. While Macaulay uses poets and their works as hints for constructing picturesque dissertations on man and society; and while poetical reading prompts to Wilson enthusiastic bursts of original poetry of his own: Jeffrey, fervid in his admiration of genius, but conscientiously stern in his respect for art, refuses to abstain from trying poetry by its own laws; to accept evanescent paroxysms of poetical power as equivalents for the fruit of reflective and earnest performance; or to grant an indemnity to any faults, which seem to him seductive enough to be dangerous as precedents for the future. The very familiarity with which he knew the old masters of English song, whose works indeed he was one of the first to reinstate in public favour, co-operated with his exalted view of the poet's functions, in making him a severe though instructive judge of the poetry of his day. When, also, his taste or his judgment was offended, he was certainly apt to lose, for a time, his sympathy with any excellencies that might accompany the faults. And, in the hasty passing



of sentence on offenders, the ebullition of exuberant wit sometimes exceeded its usual bounds of playful good-nature. But his writings are invaluable to those who desire to learn the true principles of poetical criticism; and it is they, if any works of his age, that will be accepted hereafter as critical guide-books to the literature which sprang up around him.

4. The Critical Writings of Coleridge, in his Lectures and elsewhere, are, like all that he has given us, tantalizing contrasts of great capacity with small fulfilment. His speculations of this sort, based on his German studies, add very much of his own fine discernment and poetical intuition to their sedulous striving after primary laws. Obscure, vacillating, and sometimes capricious, he yet sowed the seeds of a kind of philosophical criticism, which will never perhaps be cultivated very successfully in our cold climate.

The poet Campbell wrote criticism with fine taste and sentiment, in his "Specimens of the British Poets," as well as elsewhere. Isaac D'Israeli's books, though very weak in their critical attempts, may be named for their pleasant gossiping, and their large assemblage of curious facts in literary history. One of the earliest and best of the works which aimed at creating a taste for the old literature of the language, was Irving's "Lives of the Scottish Poets."

A very high place among the critical essayists must be assigned b. 1778. }  
d. 1830. } to William Hazlitt, who, in his Lectures and other writings, did manful service towards reviving the study of our ancient poetry, especially that of the Elizabethan age. Very acute, though inconsistent, in judgment, and exceedingly successful in many instances of analysis; moody and uncertain in feeling, but warmly sensitive to some varieties of literary merit; and displaying, both in his style and in his appreciation of poetry, more of blunt vigour than of well-balanced taste: this very original writer prompts speculation and study to all, and not least to those who hesitate at accepting his critical opinions.

Of another temper is the kind of criticism, given us by Charles b. 1775. }  
d. 1835. } Lamb in his "Specimens of the Dramatic Poets," and interspersed among his other effusions. Among these are the "Essays of Elia," miscellaneous sketches of life, fanciful and meditative, not easily reducible to a class, and probably not intended by their eccentric author to be placed in any. It is really impossible to describe Lamb's writings, in such a way as to make their character be understood by those who have not read them. His critical remarks issue from a wonderfully fine poetic feeling, and express opinions indicating at once force and narrowness of thought. His half-fictitious scenes are, in sentiment, in imagery, and in style, the



most anomalous medleys by which readers were ever alternately perplexed, and amused, and moved, and delighted.

The selected "Recreations of Christopher North" present but a very few of those critical dissertations and imaginative sketches, which, appearing in Blackwood's Magazine, have currently been attributed to the same pen. In this place it must suffice if the attention of literary students is called to the acknowledged volumes, as containing more of spontaneous poetry than ever before was couched in prose; more of original reflection than ever before was linked with so unrestrained a revelry of imagination; and an alternation, not less unexampled in its extent and frequency, of the quaintest humour and the most practical shrewdness with tender and passionate emotion.

5. The great mass of writings relating to Social and Political questions, already noticed as making a very important part in the literature of the day, cannot to us furnish matter for any special study. A scrutiny of them would involve an analysis of the contents of the leading Reviews: but a few writers may be introduced to us, besides those who have been named as contributors to the periodicals.

No man of the time has influenced social science so much, often indeed against the will of those who were instructed, as Jeremy Bentham, whose name will also have to occur again in another department. The masculine sagacity and indefatigable search after truth, which distinguished this eccentric man, led him to doctrines which have enlisted under him an enthusiastic train of able followers: but the antagonism of his views, at many points, to the existing course of things, kindled from the beginning vehement dislike and opposition; and his extravagant oddities of language have given a hold to much wicked wit. James Mill should be mentioned as the ablest of his immediate pupils.

So far as the teaching of truth is concerned, we need not notice William Cobbett, who was, in the course of his long life, the advocate of all varieties of political principle. But he will long be remembered as uncommonly dexterous in conducting controversy to the satisfaction of a mixed class of readers; and he will be known still longer, as having written the most vigorous and idiomatic English that has appeared in our time.

The teaching in Political Economy, commencing very early in the century, has had effects on public policy which, vast though they are, have as yet no more than begun. In our literary studies we can only note, among its earliest teachers, the acute Mill; the comprehensive and accurate M'Culloch; Malthus, best known through

his theory of population ; and Ricardo, who is pronounced by competent authority to have been the most original thinker in the science since Adam Smith.

In the Historical department this period may either be said to have begun, or that before it to have closed, with the labours of Chalmers and Pinkerton, chiefly useful as collectors of antiquarian materials. They may fairly be regarded as having paved the way for a school of historical writing, in which, almost for the first time, our national records were consulted with strenuous industry, and accuracy of research was held to be a higher merit than elegance or animation in composition. The early history of England, especially for the Anglo-Saxon times, was illustrated by two writers of this class : Turner, most honourably laborious and trustworthy, but wearisomely heavy and pompous ; Palgrave, equally industrious, and much more acute and ingenious. Lingard followed, as the skilful advocate of the Roman-Catholic views ; and Brodie and Godwin, as controvertors of the doctrines which Hume had taught in his history of the Stuarts. In Hallam's "Constitutional History of England," the good qualities of the antiquarian student are united with a masterly and impartial analysis of the growth of our political institutions, and set off by a classical grace of diction, and much power of exciting interest. The work is the only one of its kind and time, that combines, in a high degree, literary skill with valuable matter ; and its merit is the greatest that can belong to an historical work, avowedly and designedly dissertative rather than narrative. The distinguished writer, (whose varied learning we shall yet meet on different ground,) conferred another standard work on our language, in his "View of the State of Europe during the Middle Ages." After it may be named the tasteful Italian Histories of Roscoe ; nor should we forget the industry, and knowledge, and mastery of easy and correct language, which was shown, in this walk as in so many others, by the poet Southey.

6. Southey, as the fond Historian of the Church of England, and the interesting biographer of Wesley, will usher us, from our last department, into the Theology of his time. Overagainst him may be placed M'Crie, the formidable advocate of old Scottish views, in his lives of Knox and Melville, works distinguished by great ecclesiastical learning, ingenuity of argument, and force of style.

In passing from the history of the Church, we must turn aside for a moment to the Classical Learning of England, chiefly to be found among her churchmen. It has been neglected by us, since we left it in the hands of Bentley ; but now, in Porson, it found a chief whose Greek learning was superior even to his, and whose

critical acuteness, if not greater, was at least more wisely directed. The name of Elmsley is the only one which our time allows us to select, from the large list of Porson's able followers and rivals.

A new kind of erudition, that of the biblical critics of Germany, was imported by Bishop Marsh : and from his studies in the philosophy of that country Coleridge derived much of the prompting, that led him to the perplexing mixture of devout reverence, alternate largeness and narrowness of opinion, and obscure struggling to gain ultimate truths, which make up the character of his religious reveries and aspirations.

If we turn from Scientific to Practical Theology, we find ourselves embarrassed, beyond hope of extrication, amidst a vast mass of sermons, devotional treatises, and the like, many of which have fair literary merit, while none decisively excel the rest. The labyrinth must not be entered. But, in the glance we throw from without over its multiform windings, we see enough to be satisfied that religious thought and sentiment have occupied, among the various pursuits of the time, an increasingly high place ; and that, with the diffusion of secular knowledge among the people, energetic attempts have been coupled to sow not less widely the seeds of spiritual life. Three of the agents in the good work tower above their fellows, alike honourable for religious zeal, and for powerful thought eloquently delivered. The youngest readers among us are already familiar with the names of Robert Hall, and John Foster, and Thomas Chalmers.

*b.* 1770. } Foster, who failed as a preacher, had a much wider grasp  
*d.* 1843. } of mind than either of the other two, both of whom gained brilliant success as pulpit orators. He never fails to seize his topic as a whole ; and the details in his treatment of it, though always sagacious, and often strikingly acute, are never allowed to tempt us or him into a forgetfulness of the truth he is mainly bent on expounding. Perhaps the secret of his originality lies in his uniting so much reflective power with so much of close observation. His style is not peculiar : it is both easy and strong, moderately  
*b.* 1764. } embellished, and not infrequently very graceful. Hall is,  
*d.* 1831. } even in print, much more of the orator ; although his language, with all its richness, betrays, in his published writings, symptoms of anxious elaboration. Probably there could not be cited from him anything equal in force or originality to some passages of Foster's ; but it would still more certainly be impossible to detect him indulging in feeble common-places.

*b.* 1780. } In point of oratorical power, Chalmers was one of the  
*d.* 1847. } great men of our century ; perhaps, indeed, the very great-

est of those whose genius we have an opportunity of estimating by the publication of its fruits; and, unlike Hall, he fully justifies, by his writings, the impression felt by all who heard him preach. Looking at his theme steadily from one point of view, which often does not command a very wide prospect, he represents this aspect of his question with wonderful force, at once analyzing with marvellous subtlety, illustrating with magnificent force of imagination, and clothing everything in a diction, which, though cumbrous and unrefined, wears a commanding air of strength and fervour. Our century has already produced several thinkers who have possessed more remarkable comprehensiveness, many who have been clearer expositors, and very many who have had greater logical closeness without being deficient in mastery of principles. But it has produced very few that are comparable to Chalmers in the original keenness of intuition with which he perceived truths previously undetected; and it has had, probably, no man whatever, who has combined so much power of thought with so much power of impressive communication.

7. Although, in Abstract or Speculative Philosophy, our period was less strong than in those fields of thinking which lie closest to practice, yet here also it was the parent of much that was both ingenious and eloquent.

In the inquiries usually classed together by the name of Mental Philosophy, the only writers who gained extensive fame were two, who were, in succession, Professors of Moral Philosophy in Edinburgh. Their writings, like their teaching, ranged widely, and with advantage, beyond the province described in the title of their chair.

*b. 1753.* } Dugald Stewart is one of the most attractive of all philo-  
*d. 1828.* } sophical writers. He is equally perspicuous and eloquent, fertile in happy illustrations drawn from life, and nature, and books: he rises to an animated fervour in his contemplation of grandeur or beauty; but he rises highest of all when warmed by his ever-felt admiration of moral excellence. His style, classically regular, is not far from being a perfect model for all philosophical writings, which are intended to impress a wide circle of cultivated readers. As a thinker, he attained no decisive originality: yet he was more than what he called himself, a disciple of Reid. In Ethics especially, he was much above this: but his Psychological and Metaphysical system was, in all essentials, that of his master. He has given us not a few very acute analyses; and he would have given more but for a decided want of logical sequence, and a timidity which often checked his advance when he stood at the very verge of a new and valuable truth.



*b.* 1778. His successor, Thomas Brown, exhibited a subtlety of  
*d.* 1820. thought hardly ever exceeded in the history of philosophy. Some of his psychological dissertations are masterpieces of mental analysis. Nor is he ever arrested either by respect for the opinions of his predecessors, or by pausing to ask himself whether a truth he seems to have discovered may not clash with some other doctrine already announced by him with equal confidence. His power of speculative vision, with all its wonderful keenness, is very far from being truly comprehensive: he has been proved, also, to have misapprehended, in his hastily-conducted inquiries, the real state of the most important metaphysical questions on which he pronounced judgment: and the doctrine which he adopted from older writers as the keystone of his symmetrical system of psychology, (namely, that all mental phenomena are but varied instances of association or suggestion,) is one in regard to which it may not be rash to say, that, instead of solving difficulties, it merely evades them. His style, though neither vigorous nor very pure in taste, is ornate and lively; and his Lectures generally carry on the reader easily and with interest. Probably no writings on Mental Philosophy were ever so popular.

Less celebrated than the writings of these eminent men, but in many points of view not less worthy of a place in the annals of their era, are those Dissertations on the History of Philosophy which were contributed to the *Encyclopædia Britannica* by Playfair, Leslie, and Mackintosh. The works of the first two, dealing with Mathematical and Physical Science, can here receive no special  
*b.* 1765. } attention. Sir James Mackintosh's treatise on the History  
*d.* 1832. } of Ethics, which deals likewise with that of Metaphysics, is rightly described by Whewell, its last editor, as alike valuable for its learning, its critical sagacity, its classical style, and the moderation and good-sense of the author's own opinions.

Nor were these the only important accessions that were made to the science of morals. Among the encyclopædic labours of Bentham was a *System of Ethics*. His doctrine was a variety of the Utilitarian scheme, declaring virtue to be simply that which tends to produce the greatest possible happiness.

Other branches of the theory of mind were likewise studied by this indefatigable thinker. Among his posthumous works are treatises on Logic, Ontology, Grammar, and Language; and he had early attempted one of the most important of all philosophical tasks, a Classification of the Arts and Sciences, the undertaking which we saw to have been one of the two great problems aimed at by Bacon. Bentham's writings on all such questions have the im-



perfections incident to one who wrote for his own satisfaction, without asking what was already known; and who consequently cared equally little, though he proved at great length positions currently received by other philosophers, or assumed without proof doctrines that had long ago been refuted. But there is none of his fragments that does not suggest to us some valuable truth, which probably we should not have thought of for ourselves, and could not find set down elsewhere.

Among the speculations in mental philosophy must be placed, lastly, a group of interesting treatises on the Theory of the Sublime and Beautiful, a matter deeply important to poetry and the other fine arts. All the writers concur in tracing the feelings in question to processes of Mental Association; a doctrine which certainly is not sound in regard to all the phenomena, but which explains many of the most common and curious of them, and prompts a vast variety of striking and instructive illustrations. The inquiry was first undertaken in Alison's pleasing *Essays on Taste*; it was prosecuted, with much greater force of reasoning, in Jeffrey's *Essay on Beauty*, and in one portion of Stewart's *Philosophical Essays*; and contributions of worth were made also by the learned and paradoxical Payne Knight, and in the *Lectures of Thomas Brown*.

It should be noted, in the last place, that, towards the close of this period, some facts occurred, the consequences of which are to be sought rather in the time that has followed. The novel science of Phrenology was introduced. Developments of philosophy, which promise to have more permanent effects, were heralded by the commencing study of the *Metaphysics of Germany*, and by the attention which anew began to be paid to the doctrines of the Aristotelian Logic.

## CHAPTER XVI.

## THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.

## SECTION FOURTH: THE LITERATURE OF THE SECOND AGE.

A.D. 1830—A.D. 1852.

William IV. :—1830–1837.

Victoria :—1837–1852.

1. Poetry—Minor Poets.—2. The Genius and Works of Tennyson.—3. Novels—Bulwer—Minor Novelists—Thackeray—Dickens.—4. Essays and Histories—Hallam's Literature of Europe—De Quincey's Criticisms—Macaulay's Essays and History—Alison's History—Carlyle's Works.—5. Religious Works—Newspapers—Reviews and Magazines—Instruction for the People—Encyclopædias.—6. Philology, Anglo-Saxon, English, and Classical—History, Classical and Modern—Travels.—7. Physical Science—Political Economy—Logic—Whewell—John Mill—Metaphysics and Psychology—Sir William Hamilton.—CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN LITERATURE.—8. History and Character of Literary Progress in America.—9. Retrospect—The First Age of the Century—Novelists—Irving and Cooper—Poets—Bryant and Dana.—10. Poets of the Present Day—Mrs Brooke—Longfellow—Novels and Romances.—11. Theology—Channing—Mental Philosophy—Orations and Periodicals—History—Bancroft and Prescott.

1. OUR studies cannot be closed without a glance at the Literature of the generation in which we live. But the glance must be hasty; and the opinions founded on it must be both cautious and briefly expressed. The only names which can find a place in our memoranda will be those of literary persons who have acquired extensive fame, or whose efforts have already achieved results from which permanent effects cannot but follow; and our estimate of the intellectual character of the time ought to be formed with the hesitation becoming those who, just because they are themselves imbued with its spirit, are not impartial judges of the value or the ultimate tendency of its exertions.

The want of originality with which we, the sons of the age, are almost unanimous in taxing it, must be admitted to be very obvious

in its Poetry. The huge wave which, earlier in the century, threw on shore so many treasures, has long since ebbed; and there is little for us to gather but the shells left by the ripple of an ordinary tide. Poems were never produced by so large a number of writers as within the last thirty years; and never were so many pieces written, that show felicitous moments both in matter and in language. But seldom also have so few poems appeared, which rise sufficiently above mediocrity to have a chance of survivance. In Lyrical and Sentimental verse, our stock has been particularly large.

We are probably doing some injustice by omission, as in the case of Bailey, Horné, or Knowles, when, from among the poets whose fate with posterity is still doubtful, we select a very few as most worthy of remembrance. Henry Taylor deserves notice for the fine meditateness and well-balanced judgment shown in his dramas, as well as in his prose essays; Browning, for the strength of thought which struggles through the obscurity of all his poems; and Mrs Browning, for similar merits accompanied with greater force of imagination. Sir Edward Lytton Bulwer, also, is doubtless a good deal infected by the inclination to mysticism, or to a kind of semi-philosophy in verse, which is prevalent among our worshippers of the muse; and his metrical compositions have an artificial stateliness, indicating him to be more at his ease in prose. But he deserves honourable commemoration for the high sense he everywhere shows of the functions of poetic art, for the skill with which his Dramas are constructed, and for the overflowing picturesqueness which fills his "King Arthur." Notice is demanded, likewise, by the vigorous conceptions of Elliott, the "Corn-Law Rhymer;" and by the remarkable union of grotesque humour with depth of serious feeling, that marked the genius of Thomas Hood.

2. Alfred Tennyson, the only very brilliant poet of our generation, is entitled to be compared with the poets of the last. His works constitute a new link in that series of poetical changes, which had its first step in Wordsworth and its second in Shelley. Theoretically considered, the movement may be said to consist in an increasing predominance of the lyrical and didactic elements of poetry over the epic and dramatic: the narration of events, and the portraiture of character and action, have become more and more subordinate to the representation of the poet's moods of feeling, or to the imaginative embodiment of reflective thought. Views which have been expressed freely in preceding stages of this survey intimate sufficiently an opinion, (not likely to be generally acquiesced in at present,) that progress like this is not in a direction promising to lead to poetic greatness. Nor is there reason for

believing that even Tennyson's poems, by far the most powerful of those in which tendencies of the sort have lately been manifested, have really exerted a wide or commanding influence.

But, in their kind, they are very beautiful. His mind is exquisitely poetical : his diction is often felicitous in the extreme : his susceptibility of those refined emotions, which his favourite objects of contemplation are calculated to excite, is alike delicate and profound : and much of his imagery is not only fascinating for its natural and suggestive aptness, but marked by a very strong originality. It is not wonderful, either that he should have captivated so many minds alive to fine influences, or that his turn, both of thought and of style, should have found so many imitators. His very faults, though they may offend exact judgment or cool ardent sympathies, never involve coarseness either of taste or of feeling.

Many of his poems are sure to live : though, in the days of our grandchildren as now, some of his readers will admire, as a faultless gem, one of his lyrics, or ballads, or pieces of fantasy, which seems to others, equally admiring his genius, to be spoiled by strained conceits, or mannerism of phrase, or over-crowding of images. The exquisite finishing which he gives to his poems, both in language and in structure, does indeed sometimes injure their effect, yet is worthy of all honour in our century ; and, in setting such an example, and drawing followers after him by the force and fineness of his genius, he allows us the satisfaction of claiming, for our contemporary poetry, one point of superiority over the most famous works of the time immediately before ours. He is, especially in his poems of the last few years, led astray much oftener by an over-subtlety of thought, which gives birth to analogies that are very often really cold, sometimes quite unpoetical, and occasionally as far-fetched as the most unnatural conceits of the seventeenth century. Yet, puzzled or chilled as we may sometimes be, there breaks through, ever and anon, even where the blots are most thickly strewn, a gleam of romantic fancy as bright, or a touch of tender emotion as irresistible, as any thing in the whole range of lyric poetry.

Tennyson's most elaborate effort, "The Princess, A Medley," prognosticates, too truly, by its quaint name, a want of success in the harmonizing of incongruous elements. But it has innumerable beauties of detail. His smaller pieces are still those on which his poetical eminence rests most surely : and not a few of these, contained in his two earlier volumes, justify the warmest admiration of poetically endowed readers. Perhaps, however, nothing that he has written is more interesting than the series of

elegiac musings, in which, under the significant title "In Memoriam," he mourns, with the tenderest voice of friendship worthily bestowed, over the premature extinction of rare genius and accomplishments.

3. Among the hundreds of Novels and Romances which have been poured forth in our day, many of them by writers of much talent and skill, it would be rash to seek for any parallel to the multifarious power of Scott. Prospero's wand lies buried with him among the ruins of Dryburgh Abbey. Among the earlier novels of the time, those of Bulwer bear, much more decidedly than any others, the stamp of native genius; and, although several of them represent views of life which are neither pleasing, nor just, nor wisely calculated to be morally instructive, they not only have great force of serious passion, but exhibit unusual skill of design. In some of his later works, this distinguished writer rises into a much higher sphere of ethical contemplation than that in which he had previously moved. "Pelham" and some others of his earlier novels will always, probably, be his most popular productions: but there is a nobler ambition, and an ambition worthily sustained, in his historical romances, *Rienzi*, *Harold*, and *The Last of the Barons*.

From among the other Novelists, a very few only can be selected for hasty notice. The novels of Theodore Hook, sparkling with turns of verbal wit, have really no substance that can ensure them long survivance. Nor is there much promise of prolonged life in the showy and fluent historical tales of James, the clumsy though humorous sea-stories of Marryat, or the monotonously gay scenes of Lever. The many novels of Mrs Marsh, and Mrs Hall's narratives and sketches, are pleasing and tasteful: Mrs Trollope's portraits of character are rough and clever caricatures. Great force of description, with a good deal of overheated feeling, has been shown by writers describing the lower departments of Irish life; Banim being by far the most original and impressive of these, while Griffin was much weaker, and Carleton, in a different key, is better than either.

The satirical novels, for which the versatile genius of the younger D'Israeli has found leisure amidst the turmoil of political warfare, introduce us to a higher class of fictions. In all of these there is exerted much more power of thinking, than in those of the miscellaneous group last alluded to. The meritorious attempts made, in Miss Martineau's earlier stories, to teach the truths of political economy by invented examples, were full of the writer's characteristic clearness and sagacity: but they were neither lively enough in narrative, nor dramatic enough in their representations of human character and manners, to excite the interest that was



aimed at. The narrative sketches of the dramatist Douglas Jerrold exhibit, amidst their fantastic and cynical humour, so much real seriousness of thought and purpose, as to deserve being singled from the crowd, and placed among the reflective and speculative fictions of the day. One or two very attractive works of the class inculcate or insinuate social theories so startling, that it is here prudent to leave them unnoticed.

But, among those contemporary writers who, at an earlier or later stage of their career, have aimed at making the novel illustrate, as far as its form would allow, the questions which agitate society most powerfully, there are two whose works are, perhaps, the most marked features in the literature of our time. They may, indeed, though very unlike each other, be said to be the founders of a new school in novel-writing. These are, William Makepeace Thackeray and Charles Dickens.

Thackeray has given to his pictures of society and character all that they could receive from extraordinary skill of mental analysis, great acuteness of observation, and formidable strength and fineness of sarcastic irony: but he has not been able, if indeed he ever desired, to excite continuous or lively sympathy, either by interesting incidents, or by the exhibition of deep passion, vehement or pathetic. Dickens has done much more than all which Thackeray has left unattempted. While his painting of character is inimitably vigorous and natural, his stories are always interesting, and would be much more so if they were less encumbered by minute details: and his power of exciting emotion ranges, with equal success, from horror (sometimes too intense) to melting pathos, and thence to a breadth of humour which degenerates into caricature. He cannot soar into the higher worlds of imagination; and his tread is too heavy even for the secluded field of romantic or poetic meditation. But he becomes strong, and inventive, and affecting, the moment his foot touches the firm ground of reality: and nowhere is he more at ease, nowhere more sharply observant or more warmly sympathetic, than in scenes whose meanness might have disgusted, or whose moral foulness might have appalled.

4. In the Art of Criticism, our generation has witnessed the appearance of the only great work of the kind, that has been given to the language during the century. The fame previously won by Henry Hallam in rougher fields, has been widened by his "Introduction to the Literature of Europe in the Fifteenth, Sixteenth, and Seventeenth Centuries," which has instantly taken its place in the foremost rank of our classical standards. There are not many books resting on so diversified a fund of learning; there are not many that

are written at once so clearly, so chastely, and so attractively; there are fewer which show, as the endowments of one mind, such soundness of judgment, mastery of philosophical principles, and refinement and susceptibility in literary taste; and still fewer are there whose spirit and temper are so uniformly dignified, and fair, and kindly. If there be any book possessing all these virtues in as eminent a degree, students of literature will receive an inestimable benefit from the person who shall point it out.

Among the innumerable fragments of criticism, many of them written with much ability, that have recently been contributed to periodicals, by far the most valuable are those of Thomas De Quincey. That this variously-gifted man should have spent his strength on fitful and petty efforts, cannot but be sincerely regretted, by all who are familiar with his quaint yet refined eloquence, his stores of erudition, and his unusual combination of metaphysical acuteness with poetical taste and sensibility.

The Essays of Thomas Babington Macaulay in the *Edinburgh Review* are the most impressive of all the periodical papers of our century. The worth of their matter is always the greater, the nearer their topics lead him to that elevated ground, which he has begun to tread, with a step so commanding, in his admirable *History of England*. One feels a temptation to liken this powerful writer to Gibbon, for the exotic aspect of his diction, and still more for the skill with which he insinuates reflection while seeming only to relate events or portray character. But the epigrammatic terseness of his style is by as much above the cumbrousness of the elder historian, as his leading doctrines, (however opinions may differ on particulars,) are sounder, more philosophical, and more conducive to the good of mankind. Though, likewise, we are reminded of another celebrated writer and orator, by the concrete and imaginative character of the medium through which Macaulay sees all general truths, yet his exposition of these is executed with much greater skill of deliberate art than that which Edmund Burke possessed, and is equally free not only from his unwise profusion of ideas and words, but from his frequent offences against purity of taste. Our illustrious historian unites, to a degree very seldom equalled, extensive and various information with his extraordinary power of impressive representation; and there is not, perhaps, in the range of our literature, any parallel to the readiness, and aptness, and fulness, with which his stores of knowledge are poured forth in illustration of the objects he contemplates. Macaulay's great work has already shown that history may be written as it never was written before; at once telling the national story with

accuracy and force, making it as lively as a novel through touches of individual interest, and teaching precious truths with fascinating eloquence, whether by incidental hints or in elaborate dissertations.

With the celebrated writer last spoken of, no comparison can be challenged by any historian of our time, unless it may be Sir Archibald Alison. In some points of excellence, though certainly not in many, this parallel is sustained with much credit. Doubtless the historical champion of constitutional Whiggism very much excels his rival of the Tory or Conservative side, not only in splendour and variety of illustrative imagery, but also in refinement of taste and mastery of literary art: and most readers will believe him to have the advantage, quite as far, both in comprehensiveness and in originality of thinking. But the two aim, with like constancy of endeavour, at submitting facts to the test of principles; and, while Macaulay never permits his disquisitions to impair the symmetrical structure of his composition, Alison, fond of statistical details and of speculations in political economy, is thus able in many places to prompt curious and instructive reflection, at the cost of considerable interruption to the flow of his narrative. Both, again, are practised periodical writers, and owe much, both in merit and in defect, to the habits which such writing is apt to produce. Not a few of Alison's pictures, both of characters and events, are painted with very great vigour: and a warmth of feeling, prompting exceedingly lively descriptions, is always awakened in his mind by the contemplation of circumstances bearing on the political opinions which he has so much at heart. He acknowledges the literary merits of Macaulay with a manly and generous cordiality: he displays a self-devotion worthy of the days of knighthood, when he throws himself into the breach to defend positions, which are usually abandoned by his party as no longer tenable; and there is a courage still more chivalrous in the calm appeals he makes to posterity, in behalf of certain views of legislation and public economy which are peculiar to himself. Altogether, to say nothing of Alison's minor writings, his earlier *History of Europe* is unquestionably one of the most distinguished works of our generation; and its continuation, now in progress, promises already to maintain, if not to extend, the reputation that has been won by its author.

From among the reviewers of the day, Thomas Carlyle stepped out, long ago, into his own secluded walk, there to meditate in an independence which for a time was solitary, but with an irregular originality of reflection, and an equally irregular power of representation, which soon made his words be widely listened to, and must secure

them against being speedily forgotten. If youthful students should find it impossible to comprehend exactly the character of this remarkable mind, or to estimate justly the fruits it has borne, they will fail only in attempts which have been made, not less in vain, by vehement admirers and by alarmed opponents. The language and the thoughts alike set at nought all hereditary rules; the one, as much as the other, compounded of elements English and German, with elements, predominant over all, which no name would fit except that of the author. In respect of opinions, Carlyle himself perhaps, and certainly his most ardent disciples, would scorn that he should be suspected of orthodoxy, or acquiescence in doctrines generally admitted, on any question whatever. In sentiment, again, a generous expansiveness alternates painfully with despondent gloom and passionate restlessness and inconsistency. But it is impossible to hear, without a deep sense of original power, the oracular voices that issue from the cell; enigmatical like the ancient responses, and, like them, illuminating doubtful vaticination with flashes of wild and half-poetic fantasy.

5. The names in regard to which we have now learned something, have, all of them, become more or less familiar to the public ear. Most of those others with which also we must contract some acquaintance are, indeed, less widely celebrated, but belong to men whose talents and services are not less worthy of remembrance. In our hasty review of the most prominent phenomena, not a few recent works must remain unnoticed from which all of us are daily reaping knowledge: and we must neglect several able thinkers and writers, whose reputation will doubtless have to be recognised as permanently high, if this slight record should ever, by other hands, be continued to another stage.

In this last position are, perhaps, some of the numerous contributors to the Religious and Ecclesiastical Literature of our day. Contemporary writings of this class, indeed, many of them the organs of conflicting opinions on those questions which are agitated so strenuously among us, cannot with any propriety be examined in inquiries such as ours. We ought not, however, to leave unnoticed the vigour, both of thought and style, which has commanded so much attention for the writings of Isaac Taylor. We stand, also, on a kind of neutral ground between the religious and the secular, when we peruse a good many reflective Essays of the day; among which the best known are those of the brothers Hare, and the more recent volumes of Helps.

Within the last twenty years, the Periodicals have undergone mighty revolutions; and among these it is right to notice the



remarkable advancement which Newspapers have made, alike in ability of thought and writing, and in the extent of their influence on the minds of the public. The extraordinary amount of active speculation and spirited composition, which their anonymous authors have lavished on them during the last thirty years, would fully justify expressions of surprise, like those which escaped from us when we observed, in the early part of the century, similar phenomena in the larger periodicals. The name of Albany Fonblanque, by far the most distinguished of those energetic writers, has been brought within our range by the separate publication of a series of his papers.

The older Reviews and Magazines still, on the whole, keep the lead; but they are much less vigorous, perhaps, in matter, and certainly in manner; and they have to do battle with several younger and very formidable rivals. More than one of these have avowedly been founded with the design of giving expression to opinions, not adequately represented elsewhere, in regard to religious and ecclesiastical questions. Periodicals, however, like all other literary works, have been curiously affected by those attempts to make books very cheap, which are always becoming more and more frequent. Their origin might perhaps be traced to the Christian desire of pious persons to make spiritual instruction accessible to the poor. One or two other early undertakings of the sort have no literary claim to remembrance. The design was carried out with ability, for the first time, in the field of general information, by the Publications of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge; and these have since been variously emulated by the enterprise of booksellers and otherwise. Charles Knight's "Penny Magazine," the "Saturday Magazine" of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, and "Chambers's Edinburgh Journal," were not long allowed to stand alone. The publishers named in the last sentence, (well known likewise as authors,) led the way also in producing other cheap books, designed to convey solid and practical information to the people; and lately we have been inundated with light reading offered in similar shapes.

There has been a vast deal of useful and able compilation, laying claim, in some instances, to the merit of independent research, and calculated for a more instructed class of readers than the works last noticed. Among these we have had more than one large series of works, either quite miscellaneous, as Constable's Miscellany had been, which was the parent of the race; or comprehending a wide range of topics, historical and scientific, like Lardner's Cyclopædia; or confined to history and geography, like Oliver and Boyd's Cabinet



Library. In school-books there has been great improvement. The collection of knowledge for the use of ordinary readers has been very skilfully systematized in the Encyclopædias. One of these, the Edinburgh Encyclopædia, usually known by the name of its celebrated editor Sir David Brewster, was completed at the close of the first of the stages into which the nineteenth century is here divided. Then also had been begun two others: the Encyclopædia Metropolitana; and the Encyclopædia Britannica in its last edition. The Penny Cyclopædia belongs entirely to our own generation.

6. In the midst of our methodizing and popularizing, the well-known writers whom we first encountered have by no means been the only original thinkers, nor perhaps in a just sense the most original, that have appeared in our day. Both in erudition, and in the pursuit of the more abstract branches of philosophy, we shall bequeath to our successors not a little knowledge that will be worth preserving.

Philology is actively prosecuted in two directions, in both of which we have owed much to the impulse of German scholars, but have not been unable to add something of our own.

In the first place, Anglo-Saxon Learning, which can hardly be said to have ever existed till lately, has been cultivated with a success by which, in the early stage of these studies, we have sought to profit; and which, already fruitful in instructive results, promises to yield, by and by, a harvest yet more valuable. The literature and antiquities, both of that period and of the earliest times after the Conquest, have likewise had much new light thrown on them. Names worthy of commemoration are omitted, when we recall attention to those philologists whom we took for our guides in studying the early history of the English Language.

Secondly, we should remember, that there have lately been introduced to us novel and interesting views, both as to the Languages and the History of Greece and Rome. In philology, besides the editing of a good many classics and other works for the purposes of teaching, theories promising to be important for elucidating the history of language have been propounded by several scholars, such as Long, Key, and Donaldson. Niebuhr's masterly researches have communicated their spirit to the Roman History of Arnold, so estimable otherwise as a good and enlightened man: the History of Greece has assumed new aspects in the hands of Thirlwall and Grote: and that of Grecian Literature has in part been excellently related by Mure.

Modern History has likewise been cultivated with very great

assiduity, and has added very much to our store of useful knowledge; while several of the works have been good pieces of writing as well as storehouses of valuable research. Napier's History of the Peninsular War has so much literary merit, that it ought probably to have received a more prominent place than it holds in being named here. Several biographical books likewise must have been described in any review aiming at fulness: and, in noticing Lord Mahon's historical volumes, we perhaps omit others that deserve to be ranked higher. One of the most meritorious among all the late works of this class is Tytler's History of Scotland. It is honourably distinguished for the industry and variety of its independent researches.

It is right to observe, in the way of appendix to the historical works, the very large number of Books of Travels which have appeared in this age, as indeed in all other stages of our modern literature. Much popularity has been gained by the writers of some of these; such as Inglis, Laing, Head, Warburton, and the author of Eothen.

7. If erudition is the most obvious feature among our philological and antiquarian and historical writers, activity and originality of speculation have been shown, if anywhere, in the pursuit of the Sciences; and not in those of body only, but in those also which deal with the mind of man. Without presuming to enter a province lying beyond our competency, we cannot but pause to reflect, with surprise as well as admiration, on the marvellous advances which our generation has witnessed in mechanics, chemistry, optics, geology, natural history, and other Physical Sciences; nor can we remember, without a warrantable pride, how large a share in the brilliant discoveries has been borne by philosophers of our own nation. Some of our scientific men are also exceedingly good writers; and a few have brought much power of mind to bear on questions lying apart from their principal studies. On this twofold ground a place is claimed, even in these literary memoranda, by such names as those of Sir David Brewster, Sir John Herschel, Professor Whewell, and Sir Charles Lyell.

The Philosophy which grapples with the nature and the acts of Man, interests us more closely. It has been cultivated, in several directions, by some of the most vigorous minds of our day.

Political Economy, constantly looking outwards, and now acknowledged to be the leading science of those which rule the art of legislation, has of course been the favourite pursuit. Some of Chalmers's essays on such questions belong to our period, and

many of the labours of M'Culloch. Later come Whately, Senior, and John Mill, one of the most powerful and original thinkers of the nineteenth century.

At the same time, the Pure Sciences of Mind have been enriched by some accessions so important, and these, although necessarily remaining unknown to the multitude, have excited so much reflection among studious men, that our generation may, one day, perhaps, be thought to deserve, much less than the last, the imputation of being thoroughly unmetaphysical.

Closest to the territory of practice lies the mental science of Logic, which has been vigorously cultivated in two departments.

On the one hand, Whewell and John Mill, the latter in his "System of Logic," the former in his "Philosophy of the Inductive Sciences," and the relative "History," have instituted inquiries which may be said to have for their object the Theory of Scientific Discovery. Their purpose is the same as that of Bacon in his "Novum Organum;" whose inadequacy to the advanced state of modern science is now pretty generally allowed. In the principles which lie at the root of the systems, these two active speculators differ diametrically. Mill, whose work is one of the most masterly efforts of thinking which our century has produced, follows in essentials the tendencies of Locke and Hobbes; while Whewell, less clear, but very comprehensive, is deeply imbued with the spirit of the German schools.

On the other hand, some of our Logical writers have worked on the Formal Theory of Reasoning, the foundation of the science, assuming the analysis of Aristotle as their guide. Archbishop Whately has expounded the Aristotelian or Syllogistic Logic with admirable clearness and method, and illustrated it with characteristic sagacity: Mill, in one part of his "System," has endeavoured to justify it on a principle different from the common one. A more ambitious attempt, that of supplying certain deficiencies in the old analysis, has been made by several writers. The elaborate scheme proposed for this purpose by the eminent mathematician De Morgan has been fully expounded by himself: we are as yet informed imperfectly in regard to a scheme, promising greater simplicity, and taught by the Scottish philosopher whose name will close our roll of British notables.

Sir William Hamilton has achieved for our age a place, not to be lost, in the history of Psychology and Metaphysics. These, the most arduous heights of reflective thought, have indeed been attempted of late by a few other vigorous adventurers; some of whom (and one of these a colleague of the present writer) will pro-

bably not quit the scene without having secured a distinguished station in the philosophic roll. But Hamilton stands alone and unapproached, receiving less than justice when we say only, that he is by far the greatest metaphysician who has appeared in any part of the British empire since the beginning of the present century. In his union of powerful thinking with profound and various erudition, he stands higher, perhaps, than any other man whose name is preserved in the annals of modern speculation. The "Dissertations" which he has annexed to his edition of the works of Thomas Reid, and the "Discussions" which he has lately collected into a separate volume, have everywhere been acknowledged as invaluable, by all who can appreciate deep and subtle thought, communicated with severely scientific exactness of method and of language. Those who have profited most by his writings, are also those who regret most sincerely that these writings should as yet have been so few; and that the originality and learning which have thrown so much light on some of the highest problems in philosophy, should not have been applied likewise to others.

#### CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN LITERATURE.

8. This hasty survey will be brought to a close, when we have made ourselves acquainted with some phenomena of a distant region, whose fruits will certainly, in another generation or two, command a much more prominent place among the literary monuments of the English language.\*

The shelves of one library, we are told, contain thirteen thousand works, composed in the United States. The writers, too, while they range over the whole field traversed by those of our own country, are now keeping pace with the most advanced steps taken by knowledge in Europe.

Refraining, here as elsewhere, from touching on the physical sciences, we are not, it is true, able to discover, in any other department of intellectual exertion, works which are entitled to be described, either as masterpieces of original invention or discovery, or as models of skill in the art of communication. But, in the more solid kinds of composition, much energy of thinking has been and is displayed; especially when those practical questions are dealt with, towards which the national temper and the cast of the social institutions concur in determining the public taste. While, again, poetry in its purer forms is beginning to take root, the prose fiction has lately, like the periodical essay, been cultivated with very much

\* Griswold's "Prose Writers of America;" third edition, 1849. Griswold's "Poets and Poetry of America;" eleventh edition, 1852.



spirit and success. In respect of those circumstances which affect style, the position of Americans is much like that of Scotsmen; and the results have not been very dissimilar. Their prose writers, with a very few such exceptions as Irving and Prescott, are vigorous rather than elegant: and, although they have introduced into literary composition, in a very small degree, provincial peculiarities that are really Saxon, their diction is essentially marked by an excessive prevalence of that tendency towards Latinism, which has long been increasing, though as yet not so far developed, among ourselves.

Our hope of future good from the Transatlantic Literature of our language will be the more lively when we remember, that almost all its past efforts may be said to have been made within a period of hardly more than forty years; and that, likewise, the literary products of the latter half of that time have far surpassed those of the preceding half, not in number only but in value. There will hardly be set down, in this place, the name of any author that is not still alive. Those works that belong to the last twenty years, are very like in character to the contemporaneous writings that have appeared in England; and their merit, if insufficient to constitute a brilliant era in literary history, is yet such as to strengthen, in no small measure, the claim of our generation to that secondary rank which it holds in virtue of our native productions.

9. In the earlier part of the present century, the American contributions to our literary wealth were so few, that it did not seem worth while to take account of them in their proper place. A retrospect is now required for them.

Novels and Romances were the earliest specimens that became known to us. Brown, the inventor of several vigorous and gloomy fragments, was followed by two writers who speedily attained remarkable popularity in England. The sparkling humour shown by *b.* 1783. Washington Irving, in "Salmagundi" and the burlesque "History of New York," survived to some extent in those later works through which we know him better, and which evinced so much of predilection both for English literature and for English habits and manners. Inclining always towards a finical elaboration of style, and a feminine refinement of serious sentiment, which combine to enfeeble their general effect, the writings of this graceful novelist and essayist are yet among the most pleasing to which our time has given birth. Very dissimilar to them are the fictions of *b.* 1789. } James Fenimore Cooper. Giving evidence of careless haste, *d.* 1852. } both in their matter and in their diction, they are also distinctively American, not in their topics only, but in their tone of opinion and feeling. No failure, again, could be more decided than their



strainings at wit or humour, and their attempts at describing or estimating the features of polished society: their picturesqueness, too, though striking, is in no small degree theatrical and overwrought: but there is a wonderful impressiveness in the author's sketches from his favourite fields of observation, the perilous adventures of the mariner, and the half-savage life of the settler in the wilderness.

Among the Poets who first attracted notice among us, and who belong properly to the last generation rather than to the present, the highest place must be assigned to Bryant and Dana. Neither of them is equal, by very far, to the best poets who adorned England in the time to which they are thus referred; but both, and not they only, are entitled to distinguished consideration, if they are to be ranked among the less vigorous and inventive minds that are *b. 1794.* now among us. William Cullen Bryant is a sentimental and descriptive poet: he neither rises into passion, nor is prompted to deep reflection: but his thoughts flow naturally and easily; his imagery is often fine, and his pathos as often quietly touching; and his diction, always refined, is sometimes very felicitous. He never fulfilled the promise of genius held out by his youthful "Thanatopsis:" but his most ambitious composition, "The Ages," is a beautiful representation of gentle fancy and kindly sympathy: and among his smaller pieces, if there is no decisive originality, there is an ideality of taste which has produced some lyrical gems, such as the "Hymn to the North Star" and the verses "To a Water-fowl." Similar to him in some respects are Pierpont and Perceval: the former an exceedingly skilful poetic artist; the latter more vigorous, though showing very often those unconscious imitations of English models which abound among all the writers now in question. Sprague is often very rich in imagery: and Halleck deserves notice for his peculiar mixing up of the serious with the burlesque. The *b. 1787.* little which Richard Henry Dana has written possesses a vigour that far exceeds anything exhibited as yet in the verses given to us by his countrymen. His longest work is "The Buccaneer," a narrative poem, relating with great spirit a murder committed by a pirate, and following this by a picture, conceived much less happily, of the supernatural visitation by which the crime was punished. The pointed, concise diction has extraordinary expressiveness, not always without obscurity; the landscapes are very vivid; and not a few passages kindle into a dramatic force of passion.

10. When, stepping from the last generation into the present, we seek to complete our roll of Transatlantic Poets, our attention is claimed by a formidable phalanx of aspirants. It may be doubted,

however, whether, among these, there be more than one or two that have as yet established any stronger title to immortality, than that which belongs to so many attractive versifiers among ourselves.

If any of their works are to survive, there will be found among them those of Mrs Brooke, which, although wanting in ease and variety, unite strength of imagination and intensity of feeling in a degree that has hardly been excelled in our century. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, who is now well known in England, possesses true poetic sensibility, much original fancy, and a ready command of apt diction; and the care with which he labours to make his very slightest pieces obey rules of refined art, deserves, as a protest against the heresies of the day, the same tribute of respect which was lately paid to Tennyson. He has certainly crippled his genius by the unrestrained indulgence he allows to his German inclinations, and most of all by his thorough-going imitation of Goethe both in form and in spirit. The evil could not be better illustrated than by his striking little poem "Excelsior;" where high aspiration, eager and baffled, is symbolized by a series of scenes, which, though separately beautiful, are all founded on an idea feebly and even ludicrously unreal. His model has misled him still further, in tempting him to disguise the many beauties of "Evangeline" in the cumbrous wrappings of the unmanageable and unmusical hexameter. Perhaps, also, his "Golden Legend," with all its frequent felicity of thought, of description, and of phrase, indicates both an ineradicable predominance of the exotic taste, and a fixed incapacity for the conception of a great design.

Few others of the recent poets stand so decisively above the rest, as to claim a memorial in these slight sketches. The airy sentiment and light elegance of Willis's verses would hardly claim such a distinction, were it not that his prose has attracted notice in our country. Among many pieces of descriptive poetry, some of which are better than any thing we ourselves have lately had to show, those of Street seem to merit particular commemoration: and, to us monarchical Europeans, there is something very novel and interesting in the energy with which Whittier poetizes themes calculated to excite strongly the sympathies of his countrymen.

American Novels and Romances continue to be poured forth without any pause; and, with much of a tiresome monotony, and not a little that betokens both unripe taste and narrow prejudice, there are many of these which perhaps receive too cold commendation, when it is said of them that they are exceedingly clever. It must suffice to name a very few of their authors, who should not be dismissed without more decided praise. Miss Sedgwick's scenes

from domestic life, agreeable and natural and right-minded, have long been valued justly in England; and unusual talent, exerted on a well-chosen theme, has lately made every one acquainted with the name of Mrs Beecher Stowe. The short prose stories of the eccentric and unfortunate poet Edgar Poe are contrived with a subtle ingenuity of invention, that gives them an attraction not easily resisted. Similar pieces, and some longer works, of Nathaniel Hawthorne, show very remarkable powers of mind. Deficient in liveliness and rapidity of incident, and everywhere injudiciously diffuse, they have very great merit in style; and they unite, more richly than most productions of their class, imaginative with reflective strength, and quiet pathos with delicate humour. In point of spirited energy of narration, no works of these writers, and very few fictions that have lately appeared in England, come up to the tales of Robert Bird. His "Nick of the Woods," although reminding us too much of Cooper's Indian scenes, is in many points far superior to them; and his "Calavar," which told the story of the Conquest of Mexico before its popular historian had published his work, is one of the best historical romances in the English language.

11. In turning to more solid studies, we must at once profess our want of qualifications for estimating rightly the American Theologians. But (to say nothing of such older writers as Dwight) high value is universally attached to the critical and other researches, which were begun thirty years ago by Robinson and Moses Stuart: and it seems to be allowed in England that, both in theology and in its kindred sciences, the present leaders are worthy of the auspicious beginnings. None of the names, however, are widely familiar in our country, except that of William Ellery Channing; and he, indeed, owes his European fame to his miscellanies, not to any of his clerical labours. He is greater as a writer than as a thinker: nor has he energy enough to claim honour as a writer of the first class. But his purity and seriousness of sentiment, his philanthropy and his unostentatious courage, have won respect for him, as a man actuated by a truly religious spirit, from those who reject most decidedly his views of religious doctrine.

Mental Philosophy, though apparently not more popular on the other side of the Atlantic than it is on this, has been prosecuted zealously by a few very able men; and several of these have thrown their opinions into the shape of useful text-books for academic teaching. As representatives of this class two or three may be selected: Marsh, the meditative editor and commentator of Coleridge's musings: Wayland, chiefly known as a speculator in ethics: Upham, a judicious and rational eclectic, chiefly leaning to the

Scottish school; and Tappan, an exceedingly strong and subtle analyst in ethics and psychology. In the same relation to philosophy properly so called, which Carlyle holds in England, and very like him in more respects than one, is the eloquent, original-minded, and paradoxical Emerson. In the way of appendix to this section, we should be reminded that our language owes to America the services conferred by Webster's Dictionary.

The Political Oratory of the States must be overlooked, as our own has been; although it is a point worthy of notice, that public speaking of all kinds is there practised by literary men much more than with us, and that the printing of occasional lectures and other orations is a prevailing fashion. If a very cursory acquaintance with the matter were enough to justify a positive opinion, it might be said that Daniel Webster, the well-known statesman, while unquestionably very strong both in intellect and will, must likewise have possessed more of oratorical power than any other American of our century.

The Literary Periodicals, which are many, must be passed over like the speeches in Congress. One of them, "The North American Review," is well and favourably known to all our men of letters; and, among the names of its contributors, that of Edward Everett is the most familiar to us. Ticknor's recent work on Spanish Literature takes, with highly competent scholarship, a flight beyond the fragmentary criticisms of the reviews. Audubon, the naturalist, and the traveller Stephens, have literary claims entitling them to be named out of a long list of miscellaneous writers.

We are informed that there have already been produced, in the United States, more than four hundred large Historical Works, most of which relate to the country itself. The fact ought to be recorded, as showing both the activity with which research is prosecuted, and the practical turn which it is wont to take. But there does not seem to be any reason for believing, that the literary merit of the works is at all proportional to their number. Very few of them have found their way into the hands of English students. The Life of Washington by Marshall, and the useful series of Biographies compiled by Sparks, are among the exceptions. But two names only, both belonging to our own day, call for particular notice.

George Bancroft, who not long ago was minister of the United States in England, has written several historical works, original and translated; and he has now published four volumes of his most arduous undertaking, The History of the United States, in the latest of which, however, he has not reached the emancipation of

the colonies. Valuable both as a voucher for facts, and as a speculator who is always vigorous though not often impartial, he is also an unusually good writer, forcible and impressive, though wanting in ease, and frequently pompous and artificial. Comparable with Alison, but not with Macaulay, he is, if inferior to both of these, superior to all other historians who have recently written in England. He has not yet attracted among us the attention which has been given, most deservedly, to William Henry Prescott. All of us whose age and position make historical reading possible, are familiar with his *History of Ferdinand and Isabella*, and his still more attractive *Conquest of Mexico*. Peru has lately been added to the series. His narratives are equally admirable for their animation and their grace: though far from being philosophical, he is solidly and reflectively instructive, in works which, at the same time, hurry us along with the fascination of a romance; and, pursuing his studies under a deprivation almost parallel to the blindness of Milton, he has yet gained just credit for extraordinary fulness of research, as well as for scrupulous accuracy in recording its results.

THE END.



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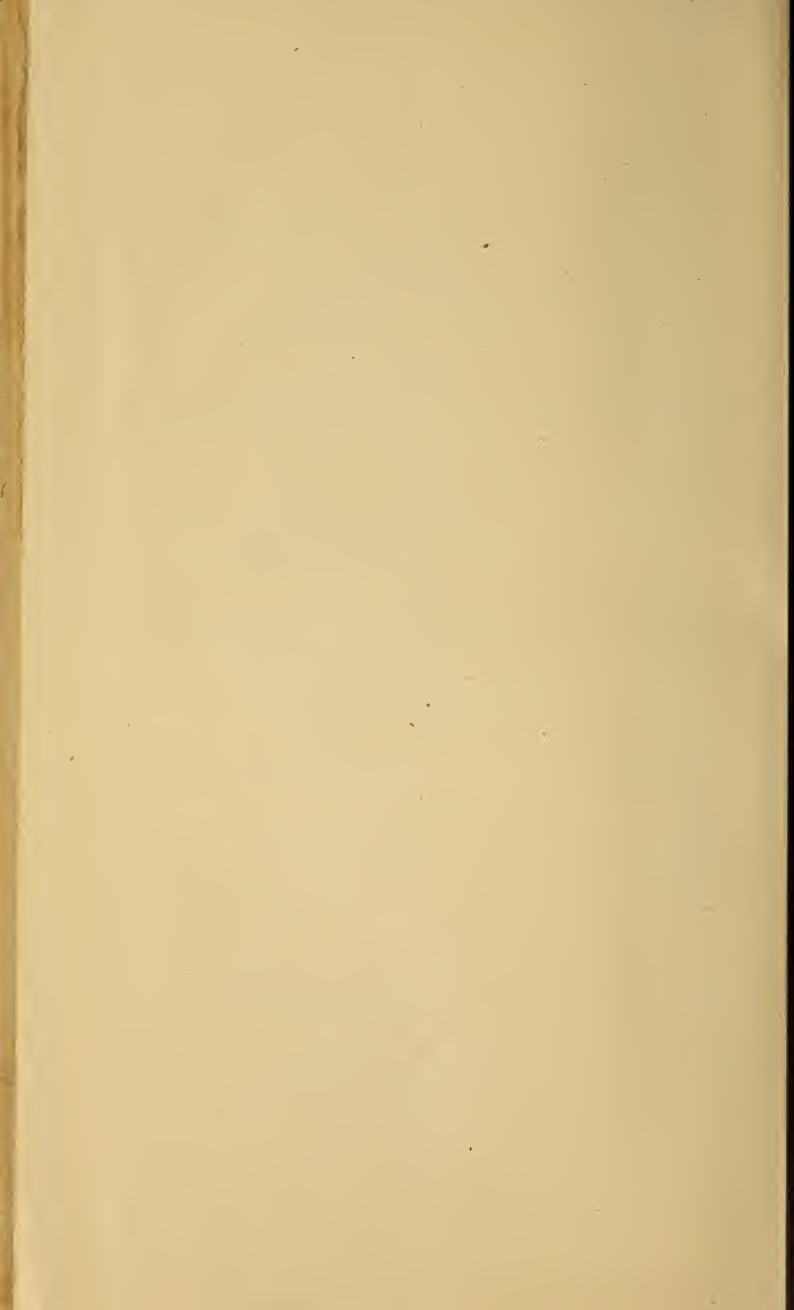
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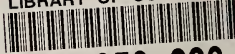








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